



BAPTIST CHURCH MANUAL

THIRD
EDITION

By Dr. J. E. Cobb

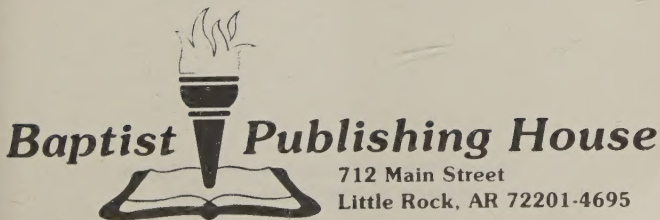
COBB'S

BAPTIST

CHURCH MANUAL

BY

J. E. COBB, D.D.



Baptist Publishing House

**712 Main Street
Little Rock, AR 72201-4695**

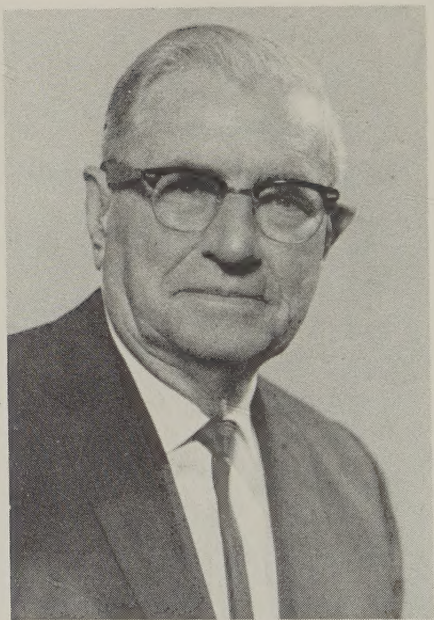
International Standard Book Number:

0-89114-056-5

Second Revision, 1984

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 72-88391

Printed in the United States of America



Dr. J. E. Cobb

Preface

Why a new manual for Baptist churches? The writer can assign no further reason than that he felt an impelling urge to write one.

The author of this manual recognizes that the manual most generally used among our particular group of Baptists is that of Dr. J. M. Pendleton. That manual is excellent in some respects, but from the author's viewpoint it is also seriously lacking in others. Dr. Pendleton's "church in the aggregate" idea and his postmillennialism are especially objectionable to the writer of this little volume.

It is not written with the idea of superseding any other, but to complement others. A different approach to that of some others is made in this volume.

The order of arrangement in this manual is quite similar to that of Dr. Pendleton and also that of Dr. Hiscox.

In offering the present treatise to the Baptist fellowship of the association order, the author prays that it may have a fair and impartial reading and that it may receive due consideration from those who may study it.

The contents of this book are the results of a quarter century of study and observation of the principles, doctrines, and polity of the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

— J. E. Cobb

May 8, 1941

Contents

1 — The Essential Qualities of a Church 1

- The Quality of Spirituality
- The Quality of Separation
- The Quality of Preservation
- The Quality of Perpetuation
- The Quality of Reproduction
- The Quality of Peculiarity
- The Quality of Faithfulness
- The Quality of Independence
or Autonomy

2 — Church Membership 20

- Prerequisites to Church Membership
 - Spiritual Prerequisites
 - Repentance
 - Faith
 - Ritualistic Prerequisites
 - Recognition of Fellowship
 - Baptism
- The Constitution or Establishment
of Churches
- The Reception of Members
 - By Baptism
 - By Letter
 - By Statement
 - By Restoration
- The Cessation of Church Membership
 - By Death
 - By Exclusion or Erasure
 - By Letter

3 — The Officers of a Church 47

The Pastor

The Pastor's Qualifications

The Pastor's Authority

The Deacons

The Duty of Deacons

The Permanence of the Office

The Qualifications of Deacons

The Authority of Deacons

The Church Clerk

4 — The Doctrines of a Church 70

Confession of Faith

Church Covenant

5 — The Ordinances of a Church 89

Baptism

The Importance of Baptism

The Act of Baptism

The Definition of Baptism

The Design of Baptism

The Requirements of Baptism

The Lord's Supper

A Church Ordinance

A Restricted Ordinance

Some False Conceptions

The Design of the Supper

An Exhortation

6 — Church Polity 120

Independence or Autonomy

Executive Rights

Majority Rule
Church Authority

7 — The Discipline of a Church 138

Cultural Discipline
Punitive, or Corrective, Discipline
Two Classes of Offenses
 The Personal Offense
 Public, or General, Offenses
The Attitude of a Church
The Motive for Church Discipline
 The Glory of God
 The Chastity of the Churches
 Spiritual Improvement

8 — The Mission of a Church 162

To Evangelize the World
To Glorify God
To Preserve and Enlighten
To Be God's Earthly Abode
To Be the Pillar and Ground
 of the Truth
To Offer Spiritual Sacrifices

9 — The Duties of a Church 171

Duties of Members Toward
 Each Other
Duties of Churches Toward
 Each Other
Duties to the Unsaved

10 — The Association of Churches 178

Limits of an Association

Values of an Association

Participation in an Association

11 — Some Parliamentary Suggestions 187

Business Meetings of a Church

Relative to Motions

Obtaining the Floor

Appealing to the Assembly

Reception of Members

Councils

1

The Essential Qualities of a Church

Many vagaries concerning the term *church* prevail. Some hold that the term has two meanings: (1) the true church which is invisible and is composed of all the saved and (2) the local churches which are, with that class of thinkers, but branches of the true church. That idea is ridiculous. It appears that anyone should be able to see the absurdity of an invisible vine or trunk with visible and tangible branches. Furthermore, the notion that the same vine could

produce such varied and opposite branches, bearing varied and opposite fruits, is nonsense.

It is an inexorable law, in both the natural and spiritual realms, that like produces like. The marked dissimilarities in the different so-called churches prove certainly that they all could not be the fruits of the same vine or trunk.

Then there has been, and is yet, the idea that there are true local churches patterned after the New Testament model which was instituted by Jesus Christ during His personal ministry. Some who believe that also hold to the "church in the aggregate" theory. The beloved and lamented Dr. J. M. Pendleton championed that idea in his otherwise excellent *Church Manual* (page 5).

In its application to the followers of Christ, [*church*] refers either to a particular congregation of saints, or to the redeemed in the aggregate. It is employed in the latter sense in Ephesians 1:22; 3:21; 5:25, 27.

Though a great and learned man, Dr. Pendleton was evidently deluded concerning the meaning of those scriptures. The apostle Paul, in the scriptures cited, used the term *church* in its institutional sense, just as we say that the lion is a ferocious beast. We do not mean that there is one large, universal lion; we mean the class or species of animals called lion. If we say that the horse is a useful animal, we do not mean that there is just one big universal

horse; we mean that particular class of animals called horse.

Paul so used the term *church*; he referred to a religious institution called a church. If in Ephesians 5:25 the term *church* means a universal church, we will necessarily have to conclude that the term *husband* means a universal husband and the term *wife* means a universal wife; but no one whom I know would argue that that is the meaning of those terms. Then why do some try to force that meaning concerning the term *church*?

Verse 27 comes the nearest of any passage that I can think of to teaching the "church in the aggregate" theory, but even there the apostle evidently had in mind the church as an institution and not a universal church idea. When Christ comes and receives the church unto himself, as stated in that verse, there will be an aggregation of all the redeemed.

God's children who, in the gospel age, are misinformed and misguided and do not unite with a true church will not be, in some mysterious way, inducted into her membership in the coming age. They will suffer loss. God, in His divine Word of truth, has revealed the true way and the true church; but if one allows prejudice, misinformation, or misguidance to keep him out of the true church, God is not responsible. He will hold the individual responsible for his gullibility.

The term *church* is found in the New Testament more than one hundred times. It is the English translation of a compound Greek word *ekklesia*, which means a called-out assembly. It has been erroneously said that just any congregation or gathering of people is a church. To comply with the expressed meaning of the word, the congregation must be called out from the masses in order to be a church. In the nature of the word itself is the idea of orderliness or organization. Just a mere mass of people does not in any true sense of the word constitute a church.

Three verses (Acts 19:32, 39, 41) are often cited as instances of the meaning of the word *ekklesia*, sometimes translated *church*. But it is also to be observed that in Acts 19:35 the Greek word *ochlon* is found, and that word means the very opposite of *ekklesia*. *Ochlon* means a disorderly crowd, whereas *ekklesia* means an orderly assembly.

The guild of silversmiths came together in response to a summons of their leader, Demetrius. As the meeting progressed, it became boisterous, possessed of the mob spirit; it became an *ochlon*, a mob. When it was quieted by the town clerk, it was an *ekklesia*.

What is a scriptural church? We authoritatively say, "*A New Testament church is an assembly of people called out from the world by the preaching of the gospel, accompanied by*

the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and baptized in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, to a life of conformation to the will of God, to execute the will and perpetuate the ordinances of Christ until He comes."

That is a comprehensive definition of a scriptural or New Testament church. It includes: (1) The means of the Word, ordained by God himself to give the world a knowledge of its sinful condition and state, and to reveal Christ as the all-sufficient Savior. (2) The active and energizing work or the creative work of the Holy Spirit. (3) The scriptural doctrine of baptism as to its authority, act, and design. (4) The doctrine that the church has been made, by Christ, the custodian of truth and the agent for the dissemination of truth in the world. (5) The doctrine that Christ is head of and lawgiver to the church. (6) The doctrine that the church is amenable to Christ only. (7) The independence or autonomy of the church. (8) The doctrine of the congregational or democratic form of church government. (9) The doctrine of equality in the membership of a church. (10) The doctrine that the church is the sole agent in the execution of the will, or law, and the perpetuation of the ordinances of Christ. (11) The doctrine and fact of the second coming of the Lord. (12) No prohibition of the association of churches as equals in performing the work given by Christ to His churches.

From the foregoing definition of the term *church*, only a local body can fulfill the terms. Things are comprehended in the definition that would be an impossibility for a universal body to perform. Only a local, visible assembly of people can meet the stipulations and specifications of a New Testament church. Every time Christ or the apostles referred to the church, they used the term in the institutional sense or with reference to a local body of believers.

Hebrews 12:18-23 is held by many as a strong proof text for the universal church theory. Rightly viewed, however, it does not teach it. To the contrary, it teaches that the church is a local, visible, tangible institution. I quote just enough of the passage to give the proper connection: "*Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched . . . , but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.*"

The phrases "*mount Sion*," "*city of the living God*," and "*the heavenly Jerusalem*" evidently mean the New Testament church. Note the contrast: "*Ye are not come to Sinai, but to mount Sion.*" Sinai was a fiery terror to the encamped Israelites, but the Hebrews to whom this passage was written had come to a place of mercy and sweet communion. Assuredly, the church in the passage does not mean an invisible one in heaven, even if there were one there (which there is not), for the Hebrews who were

then living had already come to it. "*Ye are come*" denotes perfect tense. They had already come to the church. They had not come to an invisible church on earth, for such an institution did not then, nor does it now, exist. The word *church* will not admit such an idea. It means a collection of individuals. A collection of individuals is certainly visible. If the church were an invisible, universal something, then it could no more be said of Christians in this age than of those in any other that they had come to her.

Angels are associated with the church upon the earth. They are, according to the writer in Hebrews 1:14, ministering servants to the heirs of salvation. There is no doubt that each member of the Lord's churches has one or more angels to guard and direct him.

"*Ye are come unto. . . the church of the first-born*" (verse 23), or literally "to the church of firstborn ones." Each member of the church of Christ is equally with every other a firstborn child of God. From that statement we gather that the church is composed of the firstborn children of God. She is a visible institution. The firstborn children who compose the church are citizens of heaven from whence they are born. (See Philippians 3:20, 21 and John 3:5.)

The only church which the New Testament knows is a local, visible body of believers. All such churches are sometimes spoken of in an

institutional sense. When Christ comes, all true churches will be received by Him, then there will be but one; but even then it will not be composed of all the redeemed in the aggregate.

The Quality of Spirituality

She is not a spirit body, church, or assembly, but a *spiritual* one. That is, she has a spiritual work to perform. Her duty is to perform a spiritual function in contradistinction to bodies which perform only worldly functions. That idea is plainly discerned from Paul's statement in Romans 12:1, 2 ASV: "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*" "*Reasonable service*" in the King James Version is "*spiritual service*" in the American Standard Version. The latter is a better rendition. Some translate it "*divine service.*"

The point is that the individual members of a church, having been redeemed, should dedicate their lives to the spiritual service of God. The members as a whole will be doing cooperatively the thing the apostle admonished. A church of

the Lord Jesus Christ has no business getting mixed up in worldly affairs. The church is not a commercial institution; therefore, she should not engage in worldly pursuits or avocations.

The Quality of Separation

The church is to be **separate from the world**. Jesus said concerning His people: "*They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*" (John 17:16). Jesus was in the world, but He was not of it. His life and His doctrine were in opposition to that of the world. The Scriptures teach that the church should be a separate body — separate from everything that is worldly in purpose and nature.

The church is to be separate from the world in her conversation and life. Paul instructed the church at Corinth concerning keeping herself separate from the world and worldliness (II Corinthians 6:11-18). The instructions are just as applicable to churches today as they were to that church then.

He said, "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? . . . Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.*"

Jesus said, "*Ye are the light of the world. A*

city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).

What influence for good and righteousness will a church have if her members indulge in all kinds of worldly and wicked practices? If members of churches would act upon Paul's advice to "*abstain from all appearance of evil,*" they would yield more good influence for Christ. That is their mission as the children of God and members of His churches.

The church is to be **separate from the state**. The church and state are entirely separate institutions. They should have no connection. The Scriptures teach the principle of separation of church and state. "*When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone*" (John 6:15). Jesus did not come into the world to be a worldly king or to set up a worldly kingdom.

In the temptation in the wilderness, as recorded by Matthew and Luke, the devil offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if He would fall down and worship him; but He refused. Before Pilate He said, "*My kingdom is not of this world*" (John 18:36).

The Quality of Preservation

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: "*Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men*" (Matthew 5:13).

Salt has a preserving element in it; the church has that effect also. The world would have been destroyed long ago had it not been for the influence of the church. Salt acts as a disinfectant by destroying germs and retarding their growth. The influence of the church restrains the evil of the world. Salt makes food more palatable; the church makes the world a more pleasant place in which to live. She improves the moral taste. Salt will give one a thirst for water; the church, living up to the scriptural standard, will give people a thirst for the Water of Life — Christ. Church members should exercise great care that they might wield good influences upon the world.

The Quality of Perpetuation

Christ gave the church the quality of perpetuation. We cannot truthfully say that He gave her the quality of self-perpetuation, for the quality to perpetuate herself is a divinely given one. By the term *perpetuity* is not

meant that an individual, local church is perpetuated unto the consummation of the ages, but that the church, as an institution, is perpetuated eternally.

Christ told the church that the gates of hell would not prevail against her (Matthew 16:18). In the Great Commission, Jesus promised, "*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (age)*" (Matthew 28:20). Paul said, "*Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end*" (Ephesians 3:21). It is evident that if the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church, and if Christ is present with her unto the end of the age, and if God is to get glory in the church throughout the ages, the church is of necessity perpetuated.

The Quality of Reproduction

When Christ instituted the church, He gave her the quality of reproduction. Jesus does not personally institute each true church any more than God directly creates each individual human. When God created man, He gave him the ability for reproduction. By that quality man has been perpetuated upon the earth. When Christ instituted the first church, He gave her the power, ability, or quality of reproduction. Churches have existed ever since. They will continue to exist. When Christ

comes again, He will find the same church He left upon the earth — not the same individual members, but the same church.

More is said along that line in another topic.

The Quality of Peculiarity

The apostle Peter said that the saved are a “peculiar people.” There are certain peculiar characteristics to be found in the churches of Christ which cannot be found in other groups. Those peculiar marks distinguish the churches of Christ from all others. Some of the “so-called” churches may have some of the peculiar marks, but none of them will have all of them. The peculiar traits are named, but not argued.

(1) A lineage from the church instituted by Christ during His personal ministry. (2) A regenerated membership. (3) The practice of absolute equality in the membership. (4) An acceptance of the New Testament as the only and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. (5) A biblical order of the New Testament commandments: (a) repentance, (b) faith, (c) baptism, (d) the Lord’s Supper. (6) An experience of being persecuted, but never persecuting others. Those six peculiarities completely differentiate the churches of Jesus Christ from all other religious groups.

The Quality of Faithfulness

The Lord commanded His churches to be faithful. In commanding them to do so, He implanted in the hearts of the members of the church a disposition to be faithful. Churches are sometimes derelict the same as individuals; but in the main, they are faithful to the great fundamentals of the faith of Christ. This quality of faithfulness accounts for the purity of the churches in this age. That is a quality that should be well guarded. It is a matter of prophecy that in the last days some churches will become unfaithful to their Lord and Master.

There is a promise to the faithful: "*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*" (Revelation 2:10).

The Quality of Independence or Autonomy

Autonomy means that a church of Jesus Christ is self-governing. The church is the highest ecclesiastical authority. No association, convention, conference, or synod can dominate a scriptural church. The authority of the church is not vested in a bishop, pope, or presbyter; the authority is inherent in the church herself. The pastor of a church has no coercive authority over a church. He has au-

thority as a teacher, but no compelling authority.

Democratic governments of the world have three branches: legislative, judicial, and executive. The Lord gave the church the right to judge. She judges her members. She does that (1) as to the qualifications for membership and (2) as to the conduct of members. She has the right to judge her officials as to their qualifications and service.

In I Corinthians 5:12, 13 Paul said: *"What have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."* If Paul had been a modern-day bishop, he would have judged the wicked person himself and would have excommunicated him from the church; but since he was a scriptural or New Testament preacher, he admonished the church to do the judging and the excommunicating.

The Lord left in the hands of the church the authority to execute His laws and to carry out His Great Commission to evangelize the world. No man has the right to preach or to teach authoritatively or to baptize believers unless authorized by the church to do so. The authority to preach the gospel, to baptize, to observe the Lord's Supper, and to teach the observance of all things whatsoever the Lord commanded

was given to the church — and to the church only.

The commission to evangelize the world was given to the church. Jesus commanded His church as an institution to go into all the world, to make disciples of all nations, to baptize the disciples, and then to teach them to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded.

There is a maxim that “the specification of one thing in law is the prohibition of everything not specified.” Since Jesus specifically commanded His divine institution, the church, to do those things, all other organizations or institutions are prohibited from doing so.

Some contend that the commission was given to individuals as such; others contend that the commission was given to the apostles as such. The fallacy of such reasoning is very evident. If the commission had been given to individuals or to the apostles as such, then with the death of the last individual or apostle to whom the commission was given, the commission would have ceased; we would no longer be under it. If that reasoning were true, we would be under no obligation to evangelize the world, for all the individuals and apostles to whom the Lord personally spoke the words in the commission are dead.

Since the Lord gave the commission to the

church as an institution, and since the institution still exists, then we are under the commission. We are as obligated to evangelize the world as the first church was.

Some argue that the commission was given to the local church as such. By the same reasoning, we can prove that we are not under the commission any longer, for all the members of the church at Jerusalem to which the Lord spoke the words of the commission are dead; that church — that local body — is not in existence.

The fact of the matter is that the commission was given to the church as an institution; if not, then the commission concerned only the local body to which it was delivered. Since the commission was spoken to a local church as the representative of all like local bodies, the commission is equally binding upon all like local bodies, or churches. That in no way destroys the individuality or independence of the local church body. Yet it does permit the separate but like local bodies to associate themselves in the execution of the will and law of Christ, while maintaining their existence as independent and autonomous churches.

When God created the first man and woman He gave to them the law of the propagation of the race. If God had meant that law to Adam as an individual, the race would have no longer been under God's command to propagate the

race following Adam's death. Further multiplication of the race would have been wrong.

It stands to reason that Christ had in mind the multiplication of churches when He gave the Great Commission. Christ meant to obligate every local church by the commission just as God obligated every man when He gave His law of the propagation of the race to the representative of the race — Adam. The church at Jerusalem, which received the commission from Christ, stood as an institution, the representative of all like institutions. When Christ commissioned the first church, He commissioned every other church.

The question may be raised, "What church is to initiate mission work?" We answer, "No church, for Christ himself initiated mission work when He gave the commission; there is no initiatory work to be done." It is evident, however, that some church or churches must make some move, and it is granted that missionary efforts must begin from some church. It is done by missionaries being chosen by local church bodies, with other churches by means of messengers, who should be instructed, agreeing to help in their support. That is nothing more than simple church cooperation or association which violates no law of Christ.

If churches should join some organization in which they would be forced to surrender their

independence, they would violate the plain teachings of Jesus Christ; they would cease to be true churches.

The foregoing essential qualities are not considered as being absolutely essential to the being of a church, but they are essential to churches which are pleasing in the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ. Other qualities might be mentioned, but those are deemed sufficient for this treatise.

2

Church Membership

Prerequisites to Church Membership

From what has been said concerning the church of the Lord Jesus, it is evident that there are, and must of necessity be, some prerequisites to membership in the church. A church should scrupulously guard against the reception of members who are morally and spiritually disqualified. No doubt, the careless, lethargic, and indifferent condition of the churches today is largely attributable to the fact that too many unqualified members have come into the churches. In recent years too much stress has been put upon uniting with the church instead of stressing regeneration.

There are two kinds of qualifications for church membership. They are (1) spiritual and (2) ritualistic.

Spiritual Prerequisites

Some have classified this as a moral qualification, but it appears that *spiritual* is a better word. Some people are in no sense spiritual, but they are moral. Morality has to do more with human relationships. Qualification for church membership has a much deeper significance than morality. It has to do with one's relationship to God.

Speaking comprehensively, the primary qualification for church membership is the new birth. One who has not been "born from above" is unqualified for membership in the church of Jesus Christ. The church is a heavenly institution; even though she is in the world, she is not of the world. The church is to witness for Christ in the world. Witnessing requires church members to be personally acquainted with Christ. It is the mission of the church to dispense the light of the Lord Jesus in the world. How can she do it if she is void of the light herself?

Since regeneration is the supreme qualification for church membership, let us inquire a little more particularly into the matter. Is regeneration conditional? Is it conditioned

upon something? Baptists have ever held that regeneration is conditioned upon certain divine principles. That does not mean that there are certain righteous works which a sinner must perform. The Scriptures teach conclusively that there is nothing an unregenerate person can do to merit salvation.

Nor does it mean that sinners can perform the conditions apart from the grace of God. God enables people by His grace to do those things necessary to regeneration. God does not actually meet those conditions for the sinner, but He so efficiently works upon the sinner's heart that the individual is enabled to do the required things.

Notice now the spiritual requirements for regeneration: (1) repentance and (2) faith.

Repentance — Man's nature is sinful. Repentance is absolutely essential before there can be a right relation between God and man.

The first condition, therefore, to regeneration is repentance. When John the Baptist began preaching, his first announcement was, "*Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" When Jesus entered upon His ministry, His first announcement was, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" (See Matthew 3:1, 2 and Mark 1:15.) Jesus further taught that it is either to repent or to perish. "*Except*

ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

Paul, in his masterful sermon on Mars' Hill, said: "*The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent*" (Acts 17:30). Repentance is a command of God. To disobey the command of God is to sin. Many are refusing to obey the command; many are sinning against God. Paul testified "*both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Those scriptures are sufficient to teach one that repentance is an absolute essential to regeneration.

Then we should inquire more particularly as to what repentance is. Some people present the doctrine in such abstract terms that the average sinner cannot comprehend its meaning. Repentance is not some mere abstraction; it is something that is performed by every person many times. Repentance is often comprehensively defined as "having another mind." That is the literal meaning of the Greek word translated "repentance" in our English versions of the Bible. It means a changed mind.

That is somewhat comprehensive, and many, perhaps, will fail to apprehend all that is in the word. Some tell us that repentance is godly sorrow, but the Scripture tells us that "*godly sorrow worketh repentance*" (II Corinthians 7:10). Repentance is the fruit of godly sorrow. Keep

in mind that repentance is toward God. Repentance, as spoken of in the Scripture, is composed of three elements. If either of the elements is lacking, there is no repentance.

The three elements in repentance are (1) intellectual, (2) emotional, and (3) volitional.

The intellectual element involves particularly the mind. That element includes conviction of sin as to its guilt and consequences. Before a sinner will repent in the true sense of the word, he must be convinced of his guilt in the sight of God. He must realize the justness of his condemnation. To be convinced of the awful and fearful consequences of sin will cause one to be filled with remorse, but there will be no true repentance until one realizes his guilt. Until he realizes that, he stands justly condemned before God. When the sinner is fully conscious of all that, the second element in repentance usually follows.

The emotional element involves a deep sense of regret. Having been made conscious of his guilt before God and of the fearful and awful consequences of sin, sorrow fills the sinner's heart. He is sorry, not merely because he is condemned to death and hell, but because he has offended God. He discovers that his very nature and life are in opposition to and rebellion against God. In that condition the sinner passes through an awful ordeal. (See Psalm 116:3.) In that state the sinner will call

upon the Lord for help and cleansing. The third element completes scriptural repentance.

The volitional element involves the will. In all the experiences through which the sinner passes, he is brought to the point where he wills to turn *to* God and *from* sin, self, and Satan. When the sinner turns from sin, self, the world, and Satan, there is only one other to whom he can turn — God. That turning to God produces the second essential condition to the new birth.

Faith — Faith is an absolute and essential condition to salvation. Passages of Scripture abound which teach that people are saved when they exercise faith in Christ. (See John 1:12, 13; 3:14-18; 5:24; and Galatians 3:26.)

Faith is composed of the same three elements (intellectual, emotional, and volitional) as repentance. We briefly note them as follows:

The intellectual element in faith is evident since a person would not believe in one of whom he knew nothing. The inspired writer spoke of that element of faith in Hebrews 11:6. Certainly the sinner must believe that God exists and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him before he will trust Him. Being convinced of the existence of God and of His willingness to reward the devout seeker, the second element of faith is produced.

The emotional element in faith relates to love. The grace of God, working in the heart of the sinner and producing the above-mentioned element, will also beget love. Love is manifestly emotional. The heart which, through the intellect, has been made fully conscious that God is a rewarder of the earnest seeker begins to yield itself and to express its deepest inner feelings to Him. The heart begins to reciprocate God's love. That produces the third and last element in faith.

The volitional element in faith leads to decision. The heart casts itself upon the mercies of God in simple childlike faith, and the soul is then fully and eternally delivered from the bondage of sin and death into the life of freedom in Christ. That completes the divine process called regeneration, and the individual is a child of God. He is then spiritually qualified for membership in a church of Jesus Christ.

Ritualistic Prerequisites

The second kind of prerequisite to membership in a church of Jesus Christ is ritualistic or ceremonial. The ritualistic qualifications for church membership are only outwardly expressive of that which has been inwardly wrought in the heart.

Salvation is in no sense obtained by

ritualistic ceremonies or by outward works. The salvation of the soul is a personal matter between the reasonable individual and God. God's power to save a lost individual is not conditioned upon the individual's obedience to any ceremony but upon the individual's trust in Him. As to the secondary or ritualistic qualifications for church membership, two matters are mentioned: (1) recognition of fellowship and (2) baptism.

Recognition of Fellowship — Heated debates have dealt with the question "What is the door to the church?" In this treatise we are not regarding any one thing as the door to the church, but there are certain ceremonial or ritualistic requirements for church membership. Fellowship is an inward condition, but its outward expression is what we are now to consider briefly.

When a believer presents himself to a church, makes his public profession of faith, and is received into the Christian fellowship of the church, it is not by the clasp of the hand. That is not fellowship; it is only the outward manifestation of it. It is evident that fellowship is essential for membership in a church, but fellowship is not ritualistic. It is the action of a church, in recognizing the fellowship, that is ceremonial or ritualistic.

Some have said that they could be Baptists, but that they do not believe in voting folks into

the church. The New Testament nevertheless recognizes the right of a church to judge the qualifications of her members. (Since that phase of the subject will be noticed more fully in a subsequent topic, we do not dwell upon it longer here.)

Fellowship is in three aspects: (1) fellowship in family relationship, (2) fellowship in doctrine, and (3) fellowship in deportment.

Fellowship in family relationship is based upon the recognition of one's being born from above and being thereby a member of the family of God. That aspect of fellowship exists among all who have really been saved. All regenerated persons are brothers and sisters in Christ. That aspect of fellowship is the fundamental qualification for church fellowship. Since regeneration is a divine requirement for church membership, there can be no church fellowship without the new birth.

Fellowship in doctrine implies an agreement on all the teachings of Christ as revealed in the New Testament. While some disagreement about the teaching of a specific scripture may exist, there must be unity in the fundamental tenets of the doctrines of Christ.

For example, one who believes in salvation by works can have no fellowship in a church of Jesus Christ because the Bible teaches salvation wholly by grace through faith. Furthermore, those who believe in salvation strictly by

grace believe also in the perseverance and preservation of saints because that doctrine is a logical sequence to the doctrine of salvation by grace. There must also be agreement concerning the doctrine of the church and of the ordinances.

Fellowship in deportment implies a godly walk among church members. The church, being a divine and heavenly institution, certainly cannot tolerate worldliness and sinful indulgences in her membership. Paul told a church to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them (Ephesians 5:11). Paul's writings abound in admonitions to godliness in deportment, and churches are commanded to withdraw from those who walk disorderly.

To fail to act upon those admonitions and commands is to violate the plain teachings of the New Testament concerning the policy of a church. It is positively sinful. It is sinful to violate any New Testament teaching, so a church cannot fail in those without committing sin against the head and lawgiver of the church, Jesus Christ himself.

Baptism — Baptism is a ritualistic act which is a prerequisite to church membership. It is an essential qualification since there can be no membership in a church without one's being baptized. Baptism is specifically commanded in the Great Commission. Making disciples is

the first stipulation in the commission, and baptism is the second. The Lord attached great importance to the rite.

Dr. Pendleton well said, "Baptism is the first thing after a person is disciplined to Christ. It is the believer's first public duty" (page 94). One cannot follow Christ without going down into the water of baptism. No service of a believer is acceptable to Christ until the first public declarative act is performed. Note briefly: (1) the act of baptism and (2) the design of baptism.

The act of baptism is the submission of a believer to an act performed by a minister who has been authorized by a church of Jesus Christ to perform the act. The act to which a believer must submit himself is a burial in water.

There are those who speak of the "mode" of baptism. There is just as much propriety in asking the shape of a ring as there is in asking the "mode" of baptism. Nothing short of a burial in water constitutes baptism. That is the meaning of the word. The word *baptize*, which is but the Anglicized form of the Greek word, means "to dip, to plunge, to bury." If the Greek word had been translated instead of being Anglicized, it would have been "dip." The word *baptize* in the New Testament could read "dip," and the meaning would be the same. Not only is the act of baptism implied in the

word *baptize*, but it is also implied in the preposition often accompanying it. The Greek preposition *eis*, used with the accusative or object of an act, usually signifies "into." Hence, the phrase "baptize in water" means "baptize into water," or "dip into water." "The man went *eis* the house" means that he went *into* the house, not *in* the house.

Scripture specifically calls the act of baptism a burial. "*We are buried with him by baptism into death*" (Romans 6:4). Sprinkling or pouring are in no sense of the word a burial. We are forced to the logical conclusion that baptism is a burial in water. (See also Colossians 2:12.)

The Septuagint (an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament) used the imperative form of the Greek verb *baptizo* in the account of the prophet's command to Naaman to dip himself seven times in the waters of the Jordan. That is further proof that baptism is a burial. When Christ was baptized by John, He went down into the water. When Philip baptized the eunuch, they both went down into the water. That implies the act performed. Why was it necessary for them to have gone down into the water if the water was simply sprinkled or poured upon the individual?

The individual receives the act. If sprinkling or pouring were baptism, we would have a command to perform a physical impossibility unless the individual were reduced to small

particles or liquidized. It is said of Philip and the eunuch that "*he baptized him.*" Philip baptized the eunuch. It is not said that Philip baptized the water, but that he baptized the eunuch. Philip could not have sprinkled the eunuch without chopping him into small particles; he could not have poured him without reducing him to a liquid form.

The design of baptism is related to its purpose. Why is it necessary to baptize those who believe in Christ? As to the why, it may be sufficient to say that it is necessary to be baptized because Christ commanded it. It is not ours to question the reason which God has in issuing His commands, but He has sufficiently stated the reason for baptism. We are authorized to contemplate His reason. Christ had a design in all that He did or commanded to be done, and the Scriptures are explicit as to the design of baptism. We may view the design of baptism from different aspects.

First, it is a public manifestation of one's salvation from the world. It is a figure of one's salvation. Referring to Noah's deliverance from the flood, the Bible speaks of "*the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us*" (I Peter 3:21). What figure in that depicts baptism? Here it is. The ark was a type of Christ. Noah and his family were all in the ark, and God shut the door before the flood came. When the flood came, the ark was lifted

and Noah and his family were lifted above the world. They were separated from the perishing world. It was the ark that saved Noah and his family. It is Christ who saves believers, and the waters of baptism separate them from the world that is perishing.

Baptism is not a procurative sacrament; it is a declarative ordinance. It is a public declaration of the believer's separation from the world unto the life of Christ. It is the visible line of demarcation between the believers and the unbelievers.

Second, baptism is a picture of the gospel. Baptism is not the gospel, nor any part of the gospel, but it is a picture of the gospel. Paul defined the gospel in I Corinthians 15:1-4. From those verses we learn that the very essence of the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Baptism speaks of both death and life because it pictures a burial and a resurrection. It speaks of death because the dead are buried. Christ died before He was buried. The sinner dies to sin, and then he is buried; the old man of sin is dead, and then he is buried in baptism. The new man rises to walk in newness of life. Thus we have the picture of life from the dead. *"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"* (Romans 6:4).

Baptism, being the public avowal of a new life in Christ, should be succeeded by a godly life in Christ. (See Galatians 2:20.) Baptism, being both a burial and a resurrection, speaks of the burial and resurrection of Christ from the dead. That is the primary or fundamental design of baptism — to show forth the resurrection of Christ from the dead. It also anticipates the resurrection of the believer himself from the dead.

Third, baptism declares the fact of the remission of sins. It does not remit sins, but it declares remission. Peter commanded his hearers to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). It was not in order to remit their sins, but because their sins had been remitted.

Without entering into an extended discussion of the passage, we say that Acts 2:38 does not teach that baptism is, in any sense, essential to the salvation of a soul. The preposition *for* in the passage has the meaning of “because of” and not “in order to receive.”

Fourth, baptism symbolically washes away sins. Ananias said to Paul, “*Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins*” (Acts 22:16). First John 1:7 tells us that “*the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*” One thing is certain — either Christ’s blood, or the water of baptism, actually washes away sin. Let the reader decide which does the actual

cleansing. If the blood does the actual cleansing, and all must agree that it does, then baptism can only figuratively wash away sin. An earlier writer has expressed it, "Baptism is an outward sign of an inward work." The inward work is that of the Spirit in His application of the blood of Christ to the heart.

It is plainly evident that baptism is not in order to obtain salvation, for the simple reason that Scripture tells us that it is not by works that we are saved. Baptism is the performance of a good work; therefore, it is not essential to salvation. It is the voluntary submission of a child of God to the will of his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

The Constitution or Establishment of Churches

We noted under "The Essential Qualities of a Church" that the church, as an institution, is perpetuated. In order to sustain the perpetuity of the church, new churches must from time to time come into existence. Different circumstances call for the organization or establishment of new churches. Sometimes members of churches move into sections where there are no scriptural churches. They should get together and organize a church of the true faith so that they can scripturally carry on the work of the Lord in that community.

Sometimes missionaries go into hitherto unworked fields and preach the gospel of Christ; souls are saved, and those saved people are brought together into a church.

In new fields one of two methods usually prevails. (1) After someone has preached the gospel — usually a missionary — and enough people are saved to constitute a church, some church extends “an arm” (that is, enough members to constitute a quorum) and receives the converts into the membership of the church. Those converts are then granted letters to organize a new church. (2) Missionaries may work in pairs, or even three or more in number. Counting their wives, they can constitute themselves into a church after receiving letters. They may then receive the new converts into the newly organized church. When they move to other fields, they can be granted letters of dismissal.

Sometimes people moving from one section to another come into an area where there is no church. When a sufficient number have done so, they can request letters of dismissal from the churches where they formerly resided for the purpose of instituting a new church.

The usual procedure in constituting a new church is to have a devotional service. A sermon is preached on some suitable subject. Those who intend to constitute the church vote to do so after someone has been asked to act as

moderator and clerk pro tem. They then adopt the Church Covenant and an abstract of faith (Articles of Faith). They are then an independent church ready for work.

A presbytery is not essential for the constitution of a church, though it is perfectly in order to have one. When there is a presbytery, a member of it usually examines those who expect to go into a new church as to their salvation and soundness in the faith. That is more or less formal, however, since those going into a new church usually are sound in the faith. That is the primary reason for the constitution of the particular church.

The Articles of Faith and the Church Covenant are in no sense the law of the church. They are only an expression of what the church believes the Scriptures to teach on specified tenets of doctrine. The Covenant is merely an agreement among the members of a church that they will strive to live up to their duties as Christians and as members of the Lord's body.

The New Testament is the only law of the church. Jesus is the only Lawgiver. It is always proper to have such Articles of Faith and a Church Covenant. The Articles of Faith especially furnish the ground upon which the church should be agreed. What might be termed minor disagreements might be the means of causing serious division and strife later in the life of a church.

Sometimes newly constituted churches hold what is called a Recognition Service. That is a service in which other churches are asked to take part and in which the new church is formally recognized by other churches as a true church of Christ. For several reasons it is well to have such a service. It shows a proper spirit upon the part of those churches who recognize the newly formed church. It is an encouragement to the newly formed church to be recognized by older churches. Such services have a tendency to bind the churches in sympathy and cooperation in the great work of the churches.

Any service that is scriptural and that will tend to increase sympathy for, friendship toward, and cooperation with other true churches is a good and profitable service. It is a pitiable state of affairs when one church entertains an antagonistic spirit toward another. Such an attitude will soon destroy the spirituality of a church. It will mar her usefulness in the work of the Lord.

The Reception of Members

How are members received into a church of the Lord Jesus Christ? Almost everyone is familiar with the procedure of receiving members into Baptist churches, but can they justify the procedure by the Scriptures? If our

procedure cannot be justified by the teaching of the New Testament, we should abandon the procedure and adopt a scriptural one. Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ should practice nothing that cannot be fully justified by the teachings of the New Testament.

There are two forms of proof for the Baptist way of receiving members into a church: (a) by implication and (b) by direct command. Since a church is an independent or autonomous body whose members are equal, and since a church is a democratic institution, it is readily implied that all members should and do have a voice as to who is received into the membership. For the second proof, Paul specifically commanded the church at Rome to "receive" into her membership those who were weak in the faith. Since that phase of the subject will be dealt with in another chapter, we rest the case for the present.

Note the formal procedure in receiving members into a church. There are four scriptural ways of receiving members: (1) by baptism, (2) by letter, (3) by statement, and (4) by restoration.

By Baptism

When one is saved and is then led by the Holy Spirit to become attached to a church, which is the home of the saved upon earth, he

presents himself for membership. He is usually asked to relate his experience of grace. Many churches have, through the influence of preachers who want to make a show of members, moved away from the old and scriptural way of receiving people into their memberships. The excuse is often offered that the new convert is timid and does not know what to say, but the Spirit who regenerates a heart can loosen a tongue to make a profession of Christ. The statements of new converts may not measure up to grammatical and rhetorical precision. Even though some statements may be awkwardly expressed, Christ will be glorified in their professions, and a church will be spiritually strengthened.

Many have drifted into the custom of what they term "opening the doors" of the church. Sometimes people are persuaded to join a church. There is nothing wrong in a church extending the privileges of membership if undue pressure is not brought to bear; but the "doors" of a church are ever ajar for the reception of those who have been saved.

The common procedure of singing a hymn as an invitation for membership is given as merely an expedient. It is not an essential requirement to one's becoming a member or making a petition for membership. A saved person has the right to ask for membership in a church whether the "privileges of membership" are

formally offered or not. A saved person is entirely within his rights as a free-born child of God to stand up in a service of a church and ask for membership.

Churches should lay the far greater stress upon people being saved. When people are saved and properly instructed, the Spirit will lead them to do their duty as to church membership. Modern methods of evangelism have filled our churches with worldly people who have injured, rather than helped, the cause of Christ.

When an individual has let it be known that he desires membership in a church, he is received by the church as a candidate for baptism. After his baptism he is a member in full fellowship. In recognition of that fact he is given the hand of fellowship. The new member then has the right to all the privileges of the church.

By Letter

Another way of receiving members into a church is upon a letter of recommendation from a church of like faith and order. Church "letters" are instruments between churches. They are not the same things as church "memberships"; they are certificates of memberships in good standing. They enable churches to keep accurate accounts of their enrollments.

A member who has moved from the vicinity of his church, or one who desires to unite with another in his present vicinity, should present himself to the church of his choice. That church should request a letter of dismissal from the former church.

When the letter is received and accepted, the individual is recognized as a member with all the rights and privileges of the church.

If the individual or his church is not well known, he may be received "in view of investigation." No person should object to such a procedure. If he fears investigation, he needs it! If his baptism, moral deportment, and doctrinal soundness are in order, there will be no question concerning his reception. The practice enables churches to guard the purity of the ordinances and doctrines of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By Statement

Sometimes a church in a given locality ceases to exist. Through carelessness, members may fail to grant each other letters before the church expires. When one who was a member of such a church feels moved to become attached to another church, he does not have a letter. He has already been scripturally baptized, and there is no necessity for his being baptized again. All that is necessary

is for him to go before a church and make a statement of the facts. If the statement is verified and acceptable, he can be received into the full fellowship of another church of like faith and order.

By Restoration

It is sometimes the sad case that a member has walked disorderly and has been excluded from the membership of a church. Later, under the chastening hand of the Lord, he may repent and go back to the church and make confession of his wrong. He should be forgiven and heartily received into the fellowship of the church.

A church should guard against receiving into her fellowship one who has been excluded from a church of like faith. A church should not receive into her fellowship one who has been excluded from another unless it is obvious that such a member was wrongfully excluded.

The Cessation of Church Membership

When and how does church membership cease? Some think that the saints who have gone to rest are yet members of the church, but that is erroneous. The church is upon earth, not in heaven. There are three ways by which church membership ceases: (1) by death, (2) by exclusion or erasure, and (3) by letter.

By Death

When a church member dies, his membership in the particular local church ceases. That does not mean that the individual who died before Christ's coming will not be a member of the bride of Christ. The church is an institution upon the earth to carry on for Jesus until He comes. When Jesus comes to receive the church unto himself, those who have been true members of the church upon earth will also be members of the church as Jesus will receive her unto himself as His bride.

By Exclusion or Erasure

A church of Christ has the divine right and responsibility to exclude those who walk disorderly and not according to the teachings of the New Testament. Churches have the right of exclusion, and they should exercise it freely and without discrimination toward those who persist in disorderly conduct. A church should not exclude a member upon the least provocation. Forbearance should be exercised in behalf of all; but if members engage in disorderly conduct, they should be dealt with. If they persist, they should be excluded from the fellowship of the church. That does not mean that the individual is lost; it is a disciplinary act performed in view of produc-

ing contrition and repentance upon the part of the excluded member.

Sometimes churches drop from their rolls those members who move and do not get letters, especially if they never communicate in any way with the church. No formal charge of misconduct is usually brought against them; they are merely dropped. That is sometimes called "erasure," but it is equal to exclusion since they are by action of the church dismissed from her membership.

By Letter

Upon moving from one vicinity to another, church members should present themselves to a church of like faith and order near their residence. That church should request a letter of dismissal from the former church. Such is absolutely necessary if churches are to keep accurate rolls.

No church can minister to a member whom she cannot contact. There is no point in an individual's name remaining on a church's roll if he is not concerned enough to support her ministry.

Many church members are not as careful regarding the matter as they should be. Some allow their names to remain on the rolls of churches from which they have moved because the family cemetery is located near there or for

some other similar reason. The cemetery has no connection with the church. The church is for the living! Moving one's membership in no way affects family relationships.

Church membership should mean that one is actively engaged in the work which the Lord gave the church. One cannot serve "long distance."

If there is not a scriptural church in one's community, a change of membership is not advised; the member should keep in close touch with his home church. He should support her with his means and prayers. He may feel free to call upon her for any needed ministry.

If there is a scriptural church in his community, he should unite with her. One can work more effectively in a church if his membership is there. A scriptural church in a community is worthy of one's active membership if the community is worthy of his residence and other interests.

3

The Officers of a Church

Officers are not essential to the existence of a church as an institution, but they are necessary if a church performs her scriptural functions.

In I Corinthians 12 Paul compared the church to a human body. Each particular member of the church was, in his analogy, likened to a member of the body. A human being may exist without an arm or a leg, or even without both arms or both legs, yet such a person is very seriously handicapped. The arms and legs have very important functions. Every

human body, in its normal state, has a vermiform appendix, but there are many who have had that member removed, yet they exist; but there is, of necessity, a lack of a proper function in the body as a result of its loss. Dismemberment in any way of the human body will affect the functions of the body. So it is with the church.

A church must exist before she can have officials, but a church should not exist for any considerable length of time before she has the necessary officials to function properly as an agency of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul gave a clear statement of the matter: *"He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"* (Ephesians 4:11-13). Officials in the church are God's chosen instruments to bring the church into her completeness in Christ by leading the church into the unity of faith and the knowledge of Christ.

By comparing the apostle's teaching in Ephesians 4:11-13 with that in I Corinthians 12:8-28, one will note a difference. In I Corinthians 12 the Spirit endued men with certain

special gifts and empowered them to exercise the gifts. In Ephesians the men themselves were the gifts to the churches. In giving to them those endued men the Lord determined, through the Holy Spirit, their localities of service. (See Acts 11:22-26; 13:1, 2; 16:7.) Some churches needed pastors, and the Lord gave them; some needed evangelists, and the Lord gave them; others needed prophets, and the Lord gave them. The omniscient Lord gave to each church her exact requirements in the way of officials.

Some of those, such as apostles and prophets, were temporary officials. When the need for them was satisfied, they were no longer supplied. There are no apostles and no prophets (in the sense of inspired spokesmen) today.

What officials do the Scriptures teach that a church should have? The Scriptures make provisions for two, and only two, permanent offices in the church. In keeping with the scriptural provision, it is our firm conviction that the Lord, by His Spirit, fits and qualifies men for the two offices: (1) pastor and (2) deacon.

The Pastor

We have noted in Paul's words in Ephesians 4:11-13 that the office of pastor is God-given. The term *pastor* in that passage is from the

Greek, *poimēn* (poy-MAIN). It means a shepherd. The term *shepherd* literally means a leader.

Pastor is related to *pasture*. A pasture is a place of feeding or grazing. The pastor is the one who leads the sheep to the grazing place. He watches, guards, and guides them while they are there. The pastor of a church is the one to whom the Lord has committed the spiritual oversight of the church. He is under a tremendous responsibility. We fear that too few realize the weight of their responsibility as pastors.

The chief concern of a pastor should be to develop the church of which he is the spiritual "overseer" along all scriptural lines, and to guard her from worldly influences and heretical teachings. Three times the Lord asked the apostle Peter if he loved Him. At each affirmative reply, the Lord issued Peter the command to "feed My sheep" or to "feed My lambs." Love for the head and lawgiver of the church is to be the motivating factor in every active relation of the pastor to a church.

The church is the Lord's spiritual house. He has, in a sense, placed upon the pastor the responsibility of keeping His house in order. The pastor is also a steward, entrusted with a sacred and profound duty. To his Lord he must give an account. The character and work of a church is usually a reflection of the character

and work of her pastor. It has been said that one can tell the character of a home by the children of that home. The children reflect in their deportment the nature of the teaching, training, and discipline of the home. The work of a pastor may in a general sense be reflected in the deportment and work of his church.

To be successful, in the true sense of the word, a pastor should acquaint himself as far as possible with the dispositions and characters of his members. He needs to know, as well as he may, their outlook upon life. He needs to be acquainted with their peculiar problems and their burdens. He should realize that he bears a similar relation to each member of the church which he serves. He owes to each the same kind, tender, sympathetic, yet sometimes stern and frank counsel.

The pastor must, to be pleasing to the Chief Shepherd, be conscious that he is not serving his church to "make a living," but to be used as an instrument in the hands of God in molding Christian character. *"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind"* (I Peter 5:2).

Even though the pastor's compensation should be held strictly as a secondary matter, great importance is attached to that phase of the matter. The New Testament has a great deal to say regarding it; but the primary work

of the pastor is to "feed the flock," and not, as some have humorously expressed it, to "fleece the flock." In his consideration of a pastorate, the paramount question in the preacher's mind should be "Where can I do the most good, and where can God get the most glory to himself through my labors?"

The social aspect of a pastor's life in these times often presents a perplexing problem. Just how far can a pastor permit himself to be associated with the social functions of the town, community, or city where he labors? The matter depends, in a large measure, upon the pastor's desires and tact. A pastor cannot afford to indulge in worldliness, for he is an example. He cannot afford to compromise exemplary Christian deportment in order to be a good mixer. A pastor who will sacrifice or compromise clean Christian living and stoop to questionable practices will lose rather than gain the respect of both his membership and the world.

A good criterion was laid down by the apostle Paul when he said, "*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*" (I Corinthians 11:1). The social element or phase of the pastor's life should be seasoned with a good Christian disposition. During his social visits to the homes of his members and other homes in the vicinity of the church which he is serving, he should not allow himself to become

possessed of a hilarious or frivolous disposition; he should remember that he is an ambassador for Christ. He should preach Christ by example as well as by precept.

The Pastor's Qualifications

There is no need to dwell at length upon that phase of the subject because the apostle is very specific and comprehensive in his instructions to Timothy and to Titus. Note briefly some of the qualifications of a pastor, or bishop, as given by Paul in I Timothy 3:1-7. Paul said, "*If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*" The term *bishop* is a perfectly legitimate and scriptural one to be applied to a pastor of a church. The term does not imply the idea of a general superintendent over a certain district or conference. The pastor has, and can scripturally exercise, no coercive authority over a church of Jesus Christ.

In New Testament times a church had one or more pastors. (See Acts 20:28.) *Elder* is used with reference to the same official who is designated in other scriptures as *bishop*. (See also Philippians 1:1.) The preacher who desires the office of a bishop desires a good work. Note the term *WORK*. To be a pastor of a church is no idler's job. Some of the more important duties of a pastor have already been noted — nothing more is added here.

Observe also the "desire" for the office of a bishop. That should not be inspired by mercenary motives, or by any other motive designed for self-glorification. It should not be such a desire as will lead one to use worldly and political methods to become a pastor or bishop; it should be a desire created by the Holy Spirit. When that is true, the Spirit will create a desire in both church and pastor, or in the preacher who is desirous of becoming a pastor.

First, he must be blameless. That does not mean that he must never be accused by anybody. Christ was accused by many. Christ challenged His accusers to convince Him of sin. That is the sense in which Paul used the term. One may be accused; but it should be, as with Christ and Paul, a groundless accusation.

Second, he must be the husband of one wife. That means two things: a pastor should, properly, be a man with a family. There is a similarity between the pastor-church relationship and the father-family relationship. Then, too, he must have only one wife.

Third, he must be vigilant, or watchful. As Paul stated in another scripture, he must take heed to himself and to the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made him an overseer. He must watch his deportment. He should watch with tender care over the church he pastors.

(Some of the qualifications are passed over because of their ease of comprehension.)

Fourth, the pastor must be apt to teach. He must have the ability and tact to teach. In reality, more than what we commonly mean by tact is required in a pastor. He should have what the brethren used to denote as "unction." In order for a pastor to be a teacher of the Word, he must have a knowledge of it. God does not pour, as through a funnel, knowledge of the Word into the preacher's heart and mind. The pastor must earnestly seek to show himself approved unto God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15).

Fifth, he must be a man of sobriety. He must be sober in thought and life. That does not have reference only to abstaining from alcoholic beverages, but it applies to every phase of life.

Sixth, he must not have his mind set on the temporal things of life. Especially must he not be a money craver; he must not be covetous.

Seventh, he must possess, to some degree, executive ability in his domestic life. If he cannot control his own family, how can he take care of the spiritual house of the Lord?

Eighth, he should not be a novice. The pastor is not to be inexperienced — a beginner. Some churches have made the mistake of calling inexperienced preachers as pastors. That has led

to their hurt as well as the hurt of the preacher himself. Paul admonished that young gifts be proved. Paul said for churches to "*know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you*" (I Thessalonians 5:12). Some churches have been easy prey to novices and strange preachers who have come in among them. Many times they have been the cause of serious strifes and divisions. Some have been the means or instruments in sowing the seeds of false doctrines and heresies.

Ninth, the pastor should have a good report of those without. Those who are not members of the church should have a good opinion of the pastor. He should be respected because of his devotion to the Lord's cause. The pastor should not partake of the things of the world in order to try to win the world. The world may scorn the consecrated pastor, but in their hearts they will respect him.

Some have said that so far as the minister is personally concerned, the Lord requires no more of him in the way of a godly walk and life than is required of other Christians; but more is required of him because more is given him in the way of responsibility. Where much is given much is required.

The Pastor's Authority

It has already been observed that a pastor

has no coercive authority over the church which he serves. That does not imply that a pastor is merely a puppet or a tool in the hands of a church. Some churches go to an extreme along that line. It should be remembered that a pastor has some rights or privileges as a pastor that should be honored and respected.

The Scriptures clearly accord to the pastors of the churches certain rights and privileges which are not accorded to all members of the church. For example in I Thessalonians 5:12 the apostle referred to the pastor as being "over" the church — not as a lord over God's heritage, but with authority as a teacher. For one to be a teacher he must train those who follow his teachings.

It is all a voluntary matter with the church. A church should recognize in her pastor the ability to teach, and she should voluntarily submit to his authority as a teacher. If a church finds that her pastor is unable to teach with the authority of the Word of God, she should kindly sever the relation and call one who is able to fill the scriptural requirements of a pastor.

The people were astonished at the teachings of Jesus, for He taught as one having authority and not as the scribes (Matthew 7:28, 29). It is not argued that any pastor can teach with the authority of the Lord, but it does show that a pastor has a teacher's authority to which the

church which he serves should submit.

Jesus is the chief shepherd or pastor; His undershepherds certainly inherit some of His authority as teacher. "*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine*" (I Timothy 5:17). Note the phrase "*rule well.*" That implies their authority as teachers of the Word. Recorded in II Timothy 4:1-5 is a charge which Paul delivered to pastors. They were commanded to (a) preach the Word, (b) be instant in season and out of season, and (c) reprove, rebuke, and exhort. The church that is wise will respect the authority of her pastor.

The reason for the pastor's doing as Paul instructed is that "*the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.*" That time is here, and pastors should be faithful to heed the admonition. The Scriptures further instruct concerning the authority of the pastor: "*Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation*" (Hebrews 13:7). The instruction is to follow the teaching (faith) of the pastors. "*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you*" (Hebrews 13:17). The true pastor is concerned

about the souls and lives of his members. He is working for their development in the work and worship of the Lord; therefore, he should be respected and heartily obeyed in his teaching.

The pastor's Christian conduct should be such that he can be followed as an authority in Christian example. He should be, as the apostle Peter expressed it, an example to the flock (I Peter 5:3). Paul spoke with the authority of example when he said, "*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*" If the pastor's conduct is unworthy, his influence for good will not amount to very much with the church or those outside the church. His godly life and conversation should give his teaching its greatest authority and value.

A pastor, as other men, is likely to err, but he should be doubly cautious in his deportment before those of the world. The pastor who indulges in worldly things will lose rather than gain the respect and confidence of those with whom he comes in contact. A preacher's influence in the pulpit does not go very far if his influence out of the pulpit is not what it should be.

A pastor does not necessarily have to shun association with evil men if he associates with them with the right motive in view. The Pharisees accused Jesus of eating with publicans and sinners, but He never associated with them in their sins. He kept company with

them in order that He might demonstrate to them the true way of living. A pastor, or any minister, may associate with sinners. By living a godly life and maintaining a godly conversation in their presence, he may convince them so that they will not be able to gainsay his teaching.

In view of the teaching of the Scriptures regarding the authority of the pastor, no church should abuse her rights and privileges in imposing upon the rights and privileges of her pastor.

The Deacons

We learn from Acts 6 of the origin of the deaconship in the church. The state of affairs in the church necessitated the institution of the office. Jesus, in His ministry and teaching, had often told His disciples of the impending doom of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. In view of that, all who had possessions sold them and deposited the proceeds in a public storehouse. The poor were to share equally with those who had means. At first the distribution of those things was in the hands of the apostles, but it grew to such proportions that it was impossible for them to administer those temporal things without neglecting the ministry of the Word of God — their primary duty.

Under the arrangement, some among the Grecian Jews complained that their widows were being neglected. That created a dangerous state of affairs in that there was likely to be a division. The apostles, being the administrators, were in danger that their influence for good would be marred if they should be accused of discrimination. For at least two very good reasons, therefore, the apostles advised that the office of deacon be instituted.

The Duty of Deacons

The primary duties of deacons are implied in the reasons for the institution of the office. Their chief function is to look after the temporal welfare of a church. It is almost a necessity that a church possess certain amounts of property. There are always financial obligations accruing which must be met.

Also the poor need the temporal assistance from those who are better situated financially. It is a very wise arrangement to have men who have the proper interest and sympathy to look after such things. Such duties, responsibilities, and obligations devolve strictly upon the deacons.

In our times, churches have grown to be very derelict concerning their duties along the line of administering help to the needy of their

memberships. Such duties have been largely given over to fraternal orders, but there is not one iota of authority for that in the Scriptures.

The Lord expects and requires to be glorified in the church. To help the needy is one fine way to glorify Him. Jesus taught that truth not only by precept but also by example. He never let an opportunity pass for helping one who was in need. He was continually going about doing good. In their neglect along that line the churches have lost an excellent means of gaining the love and respect of the masses.

There are, we think, two main reasons for the fault of the churches along that line. One is selfishness. We have, it seems, lost a great deal of love and respect for our brethren, and there is a strong tendency and disposition in this day for every fellow to get all of the world's goods possible into his own possession and then to hold to them for his own self-aggrandizement.

The second reason is pure and simple neglect. It is very easy to neglect any duty. Neglect is hurtful from several angles, but surely the one who is neglectful is cultivating the wrong disposition in himself. At the same time he is adding, no doubt, to the misery of others.

We cannot escape our responsibilities and meet our obligations toward those in need by saying that they have had the same advantages and opportunities as others and that

there is no need of their being in adverse circumstances. We may not always know the circumstances through which some have passed, and are now passing. We should aid others in two ways: (1) by helping them to remove present distresses and (2) by wise counsel as to better judgment in management.

The deacons are, by virtue of their office, the treasurers of a church. It is in keeping with the teachings of the Scriptures that a deacon be the church treasurer to whom the funds are entrusted for proper distribution. The qualifications given by the apostle Paul for deacons argue strongly for a deacon to be the church treasurer. It is the duty of the deacons to see that the pastor is duly compensated by the church and that the poor widows, and others who are poor, are aided in their distress. It is their duty to keep a church informed about those things and to urge that the church furnish the necessary funds to procure the needed relief. It is a duty enjoined by Scripture that the deacons serve tables; the tables of the needy and of the pastors are evidently the tables under consideration.

Churches generally have the deacons serve the elements of the Lord's Supper when it is being observed. There is no scriptural injunction for the practice. It was adopted, it seems, as a convenience rather than as an enjoined duty. Pastors are the proper ones to officiate in the

observance of the Supper. They may, for convenience, ask the deacons, or any other members, to pass the elements to the members of the church.

Some churches have trustees. In some states that is a legal necessity; but since the deacons are to look after the business affairs of a church, it seems more in keeping with the Scriptures to let them act also as the trustees.

Some churches, because of negligence upon the part of their deacons, have committees on finance. That is unnecessary because that is the deacons' responsibility.

Men who have accepted the responsibilities of the deaconship should carry out their duties faithfully. They have the New Testament, the highest and most authentic source of information available, as their guide. There are also good books written by good and able men which will guide them in informing themselves. It would be much better to take the time to get the necessary information to perform the office of deacon well than to suffer the loss of the reward for not so doing. Paul said, "*They that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (I Timothy 3:13).

The Permanence of the Office

Those who contend that the office of deacon

was only a temporary arrangement conclude that when the conditions necessitating the institution of the office were removed, the office was no longer necessary. That idea is based upon fallacious reasoning. We note only two fallacies of the idea. First, Paul gave the qualifications of deacons along with those of the pastor. That indicates the permanence of the office. Second, there have always been, and always will be, the poor of the churches who will need the temporal aid of their abler brethren. That was the prime reason for the institution of the office. Those two things are sufficient evidence for the permanence of the office.

The Qualifications of Deacons

The qualifications of the deacon are practically the same as those of a pastor. His qualifications may be listed under three heads: (1) conjugal, (2) moral, and (3) spiritual.

Conjugal — That has reference to his family relationships. He is to be the husband of one wife, and he is to have his children in subjection. He must have some executive ability, or he cannot use the office of deacon well.

Moral — That has reference to his dealings with his fellowman. In that respect he must be grave, or sober; he must not be double-tongued; he must not be disposed to flatter one

to his face and to slander him to his back. He must not be covetous for the things of the world. That is a timely qualification in view of his duties as a dispenser of the church's finances. A covetous deacon might be tempted to do as Judas did and covet the entrusted funds of the church.

Spiritual — His spiritual qualifications are indicated in the phrase: "*Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.*" He must be sound in the faith of the Scriptures, and he must be a spiritually minded man. Even though he is to administer the temporal affairs of the church, he is to do so as unto God; for it is the Lord's spiritual house, and he is the Lord's servant.

Churches should carefully follow the qualifications of I Timothy 3 in choosing men to be deacons, for it is a very responsible office. Deacons of the right kind can be of great aid in edifying a church; whereas, if they are not properly qualified, they may be detrimental to the growth and development of a church.

The Authority of Deacons

The deacon has authority only in his sphere. He does not have a greater voice in the management of the affairs of the church than other members. Perhaps, it might be of some importance to look into the meaning of the word *deacon*.

In the New Testament the Greek *diakonos* signifies a servant. The term is applied in the Scriptures not only to the permanent office of deacon, but also to others who were servants. The title seems to have held relative to that office because of its permanence. In Romans 13:4 *diakonos* is translated "minister." There it is applied to civil rulers. The passage might be rendered, "He is the deacon of God."

The term is also applied to the apostles. In Acts 1:17 "obtained part of this ministry" may be rendered "received part of this deaconship." Acts 1:25 "ministry" could have been rendered "deaconship." In I Corinthians 3:5 Paul stated that he and Apollos were "*diakonoι*" (deacons or ministers) by whom they believed. In Ephesians 6:21 Paul referred to Tychicus as a faithful minister (deacon) — from *diakonos*. Those references are sufficient to show us that the term may be applied to any minister or servant of Christ.

The deacons, however, were appointed to a specific work which has been pointed out. That was to be to the church a permanent office; therefore, the name was given to them to designate that permanent office and duty. No kind of authority or rule is given to the deacons by the New Testament. They are to be the leaders in the temporal affairs of the church as the pastor is to be a leader in the spiritual affairs.

Some Baptist churches have drifted toward centralizing authority in the deacons. Some speak of the "board of deacons." The Scriptures know nothing of that. A "board" carries with it the idea of some amount of coercive authority. The deacons do not possess that. They have no more authority in the discipline of the church or in filling the pulpit when it is vacant than any other member of the church.

It might be proper to refer to the deacons as a committee but never as a board, possessing coercive authority. A sacred trust has been committed to them; they are the servants of the Lord's churches.

The Church Clerk

The offices of pastor and deacon are the only permanent scriptural church offices, but it is a wise arrangement to have a clerk whose duty it is to keep a full and accurate record of all the proceedings of the church. He should also keep a record of the membership of the church, and their residence.

In fact, the church clerk is not an officer in the sense of one who possesses some sort of right to rule in some sphere. The clerk's responsibilities are merely to keep the records and membership roll of the church as a matter of convenience. That violates no scripture. The Scriptures furnish us with the records of

church activities. That is held as ample ground for the position of church clerk.

No special spiritual qualifications are required for the position. Any worthy member who has the ability to write and to read an accurate record of the church's business proceedings possesses all the qualifications necessary for the position of clerk.

4

The Doctrines of a Church

Doctrine may mean one of two things: (1) it may mean what the church teaches, or (2) it may mean what the church believes and confesses the Bible to teach. In this treatise, it is used in the latter sense. No church has the divine authority to formulate any doctrine not specifically taught in the Scriptures.

There are two ways of formulating doctrines. One is to have an opinion of one's own and then to read the Scriptures to find those disconnected scriptures which seem to bear out that doctrine. For example, one may have an opin-

ion that apostasy is true. He reads the Scriptures in search of those disconnected passages which seem to bear out his theory. By misconstruction and misinterpretation, he adduces the doctrine of apostasy.

Almost any false doctrine may be thus bolstered by the Scriptures, but such is very sinful. It is what the apostle Paul called "*handling the word of God deceitfully*" (II Corinthians 4:2).

The proper way to arrive at the teaching of the Bible upon any given subject is by grouping all passages related to a certain subject, taking them in their proper connection, and placing the proper connotation upon the words. The correct interpretation will follow logically.

It is a very common thing to hear people say, "I believe 'so and so.'" So many seem to put more emphasis and authority upon their "I believe" than they do upon what the Scriptures say. What one believes is not worth the snap of a finger if it is not based upon and adduced from the Word of God.

Roman Catholicism assumes the right to formulate doctrines. She issues decrees and rules setting forth to the world her doctrines, most of which are sinful and corrupt. Take, for instance, the doctrines of the infallibility of the pope, the immaculate conception, and others which were formulated long after the Scrip-

tures were written. The doctrine of the confessional is absolutely unfounded in the Scriptures. It is one which has been the occasion of base and corrupt sins. There is not an iota of Scripture for those doctrines. That "church" has merely assumed the prerogative of formulating doctrines. Such doctrines will best serve the purpose of depraved men and their selfish interests.

Some claim that they do not believe in creeds. The word *creed* is derived from the Latin "*credo*." It means, "I believe." If one does not have a creed, he has no beliefs concerning the teachings of the Scriptures. Every intelligent person who studies the Scriptures certainly has a belief as to what the Scriptures teach. Whatever he believes the Scriptures to teach, whether written or verbally declared, is his creed. Every student of the Scriptures has a creed. The outstanding creed of some is, "We speak when the Bible speaks, and we are silent when the Bible is silent." Like those in the church at Corinth who said they were "of Christ," they cause more division and confusion than almost any class.

We are admonished to search the Scriptures. The inspired Scriptures form the criterion by which all human beliefs or creeds must be judged. If one's creed does not comport to the Scriptures, his creed is wrong. If one's creed is based upon a proper connection and division of

the Scriptures rightly construed and interpreted, it will stand the fiery test of God's judgment.

We often hear, "Why are there so many different churches?" Since there is but one inspired Bible from which all should derive their beliefs, that is a question of propriety. The answer to the question is found in the fact that people, in the depraved state of their minds, are possessed of preconceived opinions concerning the way of God. If all would realize that God is the divine sovereign of the universe, that He had the perfect right to establish the standards which govern the moral and spiritual acts of men, and that all human acts come under those terms, then, perhaps, all could better arrive at the true teachings of the Scriptures. Then there would not be so many conflicting creeds and diverse sects in the world. In arriving at the correctness of a creed, one should study the Bible to find whether it will measure up to the standard of God. To God all will have to give an account of life in all its aspects.

We append herewith a confession of what Baptists believe to be the fundamental tenets of the doctrines which any church and all believers should hold.

Confession of Faith

(Note: The following Confession of Faith is a

revision of the one found in Dr. Pendleton's *Church Manual*. Revision was thought necessary in some of the articles in order to set forth clearly what a majority of Baptists hold to be the true import of the Scriptures concerning certain points of doctrine.)

Article I

INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

We believe that the Holy Bible is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction, written by men divinely inspired. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter. It reveals the principles by which God will judge all; therefore, it is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true basis of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried.

Proverbs 30:5, 6; John 5:24; 12:48; 17:17; Acts 11:14; Romans 2:12-16; I Corinthians 4:3, 4; Ephesians 4:1-6; Philip-pians 3:16; II Timothy 3:16, 17; II Peter 1:20, 21; I John 4:1; Jude 3

Article II

THE NAME, NATURE, AND BEING OF GOD

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God. An infinite, intelligent

Spirit, His name is Jehovah. He is the Maker and Supreme Ruler of the universe. He is inexpressibly glorious in holiness and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love. In the unity of the Godhead, there are three separate and distinct persons. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in every divine perfection, executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

Exodus 15:11; Psalm 83:18; Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 12:29, 30; John 4:24; 10:30; 15:26; Acts 5:3, 4; II Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 2:18; I Peter 1:15, 16; Revelation 1:4; 4:11

Article III

THE FALL OF MAN

We believe that man was created in a state of holiness, under the law of his Maker. By a voluntary transgression he fell from that happy and holy state. In consequence of that fall, all are now sinners, not by constraint but by choice. By nature all are utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, inclined to evil; therefore, all are under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.

Genesis 1:27; 3:6-24; Psalm 51:5; Isaiah 53:6; Ezekiel 18:19, 20; Acts 17:24-28; Romans 1:18, 19; 3:9-18; 5:12, 19; 8:7; Galatians 3:10, 22; Ephesians 2:1-3

Article IV

THE WAY OF SALVATION

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly by grace through the mediatorial office of the Son of God. By the appointment of the Father, the Son freely took upon himself man's nature, yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full atonement for sins. Having risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in heaven. Uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Savior.

Psalms 45:1-17; 89:19; Isaiah 42:21; 53:3, 5; Matthew 20:28; John 1:1-14; 3:16; 4:10; Acts 15:11; Romans 3:21-26; 9:13-15; II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 4:4, 5; Ephesians 2:5, 8-10; Philippians 2:6, 7; Colossians 3:1-4; Hebrews 1:3, 8; 4:14; 7:25

Article V

THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to those who believe in Him is salvation. Salvation includes all the redemptive acts of God on behalf of the sinner. Justification is the act of God whereby He declares a believer just. Redemption is the act of God whereby He purchased by the shed blood of Christ and by His mighty power the

freedom of the believer from the power and dominion of sin. Grace is the disposition of God wherein He saves men, not upon any merit of their own work, but wholly by the work and merit of Christ. Propitiation is the act of God in offering Christ as the sinner's substitute. Imputation is the act of God whereby He imputes or counts the righteousness and excellencies of Christ to the believer. Forgiveness is the act of God by which He remits the sins of a believer. Sanctification is the act of God whereby He imparts His holiness to the inner man, or newly born one, and sets apart the entire man to the service of God. Glorification is the act of God whereby that part of man which is mortal will be changed into a state and condition of immortality.

Matthew 1:21; John 17:17, 19; Acts 4:12; 5:31; 10:43; 20:32; Romans 1:16; 3:24, 25; 4:1-5, 8, 9, 13-25; 5:1; 8:17; I Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 15:51-53; Galatians 3:11; Ephesians 1:7; 2:5, 8-10; 5:26; Philippians 3:20, 21; Colossians 1:14; I Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 9:12; I Peter 1:18; II Peter 1:4; I John 1:2; 3:1, 2, 9

Article VI

SALVATION FREE

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel. It is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith. Nothing prevents

the salvation of the greatest sinner on the earth but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel. Such rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.

Proverbs 1:24; Isaiah 55:1; Matthew 11:20; 23:37; Mark 1:15; Luke 14:17; 19:27; John 3:19; 5:40; Romans 1:15-17; 9:32; 16:26; II Thessalonians 1:8; Revelation 22:17

Article VII

GRACE IN REGENERATION

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated or born from above. Regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind. It is effected in a manner above man's comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth, so as to secure his voluntary obedience to the gospel. Its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith, and newness of life.

Ezekiel 36:26; Matthew 3:8-10; John 1:13; 3:3, 5, 7, 8; Romans 2:28, 29; 5:5; I Corinthians 1:18; II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:19-23; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 2:13; Colossians 3:9-11; James 1:16-18; I Peter 1:22, 25; I John 4:7; 5:1, 4, 8; Revelation 21:27

Article VIII

REPENTANCE AND FAITH

We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties and also inseparable graces,

wrought in men's souls by the regenerating Spirit of God. Whereby, being deeply convinced of their guilt, danger, and helplessness and of the way of salvation by Christ, they turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy. At the same time they heartily receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their Prophet, Priest, and King, and rely on Him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.

Mark 1:15; Luke 18:13; John 16:8; Acts 2:37, 38; 3:22, 23; 16:30, 31; Romans 10:9-11; II Corinthians 7:11; Ephesians 2:8; II Timothy 1:12; James 4:7-10; I John 5:1

Article IX

GOD'S PURPOSE IN GRACE

We believe that election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which He graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners. Being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness being infinitely free, wise, holy, and unchangeable. It utterly excludes boasting and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of His free mercy. It encourages the use of means in the highest degree, and it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel. It is the foundation of

Christian assurance. To ascertain it in regard to oneself demands and deserves the utmost diligence.

Exodus 33:18, 19; Hosea 11:1; John 10:16; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:28-31; 11:28, 29; I Corinthians 4:7; 9:22; Ephesians 1:3-6, 13, 14; Philippians 3:12; I Thessalonians 1:4-10; II Thessalonians 2:13, 14; II Timothy 1:8, 9; 2:10; James 1:17, 18; I Peter 2:9; II Peter 1:10, 11

Article X

THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end. Their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors. A special providence watches over their welfare since they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Jeremiah 32:40; Matthew 13:20, 21; John 6:66-69; 8:31; 13:18; Romans 8:28, 35-39; Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; Hebrews 13:5; I John 2:19, 27, 28; 4:4; 5:18

Article XI

HARMONY OF THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

We believe that the law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government; it is holy, just, and good. The inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to

fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love for sin. To deliver them from disobedience and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy law is one great end of the gospel and the means of grace connected with the establishment of the church.

Joshua 24:19; Psalm 119; Jeremiah 13:23; Matthew 5:17; 16:17, 18; John 5:44; 6:44; Romans 3:20, 21; 4:15; 7:12; 8: 2, 4, 7, 8; 10:4; I Corinthians 12:28; Galatians 3:21; Hebrews 12:14

Article XII

A NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

We believe that a church of Jesus Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. The church observes the ordinances of Christ governed by His law and exercises the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in her by His Word. Her only ordained officers are bishops (pastors) and deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the epistles to Timothy and Titus.

Matthew 16:13-18; 18:15-20; 28:20; John 14:21; Acts 2:41, 42; I Corinthians 1:1-13; 5:12, 13; Ephesians 4:7; Philippians 1:1, 27; 4:7; I Timothy 3

Article XIII

BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that scriptural baptism is the

dipping into water by church authority of a believer in Christ. Baptism is performed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. It shows forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem the believer's faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior with its effect, his death to sin and resurrection to a new life. It is prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation, and to the Lord's Supper. In the Lord's Supper the members of a church by the sacred use of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine are to commemorate together the undying love of Christ. The Supper should always be preceded by a solemn self-examination.

Matthew 3:5, 6; 28:18-20; John 6:26-71; Acts 2:41, 42; 8:36-39; Romans 6:4; I Corinthians 5:1, 8; 11:26, 28

Article XIV

THE LORD'S DAY

We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is to be kept sacred as a memorial of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Christians, refraining from all secular labor and worldly recreations, should devoutly use all the means of grace, both private and public, by which they may be drawn closer to God and provoked to holier living, in preparation for their eternal abode in the presence of God.

Psalm 118:15, 24; Isaiah 58:13, 14; Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1, 2; Colossians 2:16, 17; Hebrews 4:3-11; 10:24, 25; Revelation 1:10

Article XV

CIVIL GOVERNMENT

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment and arrangement for the best interests and good order of human society. Magistrates are to be prayed for and conscientiously honored and obeyed in matters not opposed to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of men's consciences and the prince of the kings of the earth.

Deuteronomy 16:18; Psalm 2; Jeremiah 30:21; Daniel 3:15-18; Matthew 10:28; 22:21; 23:10; Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1-7; 14:4; I Peter 2:13; Revelation 19:6

Article XVI

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked. Such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and sanctified by the Spirit of our God are truly righteous in His esteem. Whereas all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His

sight wicked and under the curse. That distinction holds among men both in and after death.

Proverbs 12:26; 14:32; Malachi 3:18; Matthew 13; Luke 16:25; Acts 10:34, 35; Romans 1:17; 7:16; Galatians 3:10; I John 2:29; 3:7

Article XVII

THE RESURRECTIONS

We believe that there will be a resurrection both of the righteous and of the wicked, with one thousand years intervening between the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked. The dead in Christ shall rise first; at the expiration of the one thousand years the wicked will then be raised and judged.

John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15, 21; 26:8; I Corinthians 15:51, 52; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20:4-6, 12-15

Article XVIII

CHRIST'S APPEARING; THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS; THE GREAT TRIBULATION; THE COMING OF CHRIST IN GLORY

We believe that at the end of the gospel age Christ will appear. The sleeping saints will be resurrected and the living saints will be instantaneously changed, together to be caught up to the Lord. That, we believe, will occur at

the beginning of Daniel's "Seventieth Week." During the first three and one-half years the Beast will deceive the Jews, and for a while the world's government will be organized under the domination of the Beast. The Beast will, at the beginning of that "week," or seven-year period, make a covenant with the elect (the Jews) to rebuild their temple and to restore their ancient worship. In the middle of that week he will break his covenant and the Great Tribulation will then begin and continue for three and one-half years. During that period, the saints who shall then be with Christ shall receive their rewards, and the Lamb and the bride (the church) shall be married. The Great Tribulation will climax with the Battle of Armageddon. At that time Christ will destroy those armies, the judgment of the nations will occur, the living wicked will be destroyed, and the millennial reign of Christ and His saints over the earth will begin.

Daniel 9:20-27; Zechariah 14; Matthew 24:31-46; I Corinthians 15:51-53; II Corinthians 5:1-10; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 19:7-21; 22:12

Article XIX

THE JUDGMENTS

We believe that there will be a judgment of rewards for the righteous at Christ's coming to

receive His saints. The wicked will be judged at the close of the millennial age.

Psalm 58:11; Proverbs 11:18; I Corinthians 3:8, 11-15; II Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 11:18; 20:12-15; 22:12

Article XX

THE FINAL STATES

We believe that the earth will be redeemed from the curse of sin and fitted as the eternal dwelling place of the people of God. The fitting of the earth for the eternal home of the redeemed will be by a process of purification by fire, or melting. The finally impenitent and incorrigible wicked will be cast, both souls and resurrected bodies, into Gehenna, or the lake of fire and brimstone, where they shall be punished forever.

Psalm 9:17; Proverbs 27:20; Isaiah 65:17; Ezekiel 31:16; Matthew 5:29, 30; 10:28; Luke 12:5; Romans 8:20-22; Hebrews 1:10-12; II Peter 1:10-13; Jude 7; Revelation 20:10; 21; 22

Church Covenant

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this

assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote her prosperity and spirituality; to sustain her worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of alcoholic drinks as a beverage; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation,

and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place, we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

5

The Ordinances of a Church

In a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, there are only two ordinances.

Roman Catholicism has seven "sacraments" which include baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, matrimony, absolution or penance, holy orders (setting apart for ministry), and extreme unction. Others refer to baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments, but they are not sacraments. They are ordinances of Christ's church. If baptism and the Lord's Supper were essential to salvation, it would be correct to refer to them as sacraments. They are in no

sense essential to one's salvation; therefore, they are not sacraments.

To speak of *church ordinances* does not mean that the church in or of herself institutes ordinances. Christ himself instituted the ordinances in His church. It was not given to the apostles, any other officers of the church, or even the churches themselves to institute ordinances. Christ commissioned the church to teach all nations to observe all of His commandments (Matthew 28:18-20). The institution of her ordinances is not a discretionary matter with the church. Her responsibility is to obey the Lord in the observance only of the ordinances instituted by the Lord himself. It was Christ's good pleasure to institute in His churches only two ordinances — baptism and the Lord's Supper.

They are called *church ordinances* because they pertain only to the church. They do not belong to the world or to any organization or institution other than a church of Christ.

Some refer to baptism as a *gospel ordinance*, but Christ gave the ordinance to the church. Churches of Christ are the only institutions who have the authority to administer it. It is truly and only a church ordinance. It is a gospel ordinance in the sense that it is authorized by Christ in His gospel, if one takes the general sense of the New Testament Scriptures as the gospel.

Baptism

Much has been said and written concerning baptism. It is not the purpose of this little treatise to enter into a lengthy discussion of the subject. It is proper, no doubt, to restate some things which Baptists believe the Bible teaches with reference to that sacred ordinance.

The Importance of Baptism

We are living in an age when people seem to think that they have the liberty to disregard, at their own pleasure, the law of Christ. Some have falsely reasoned that since baptism is not essential to salvation they should not observe the ordinance at all.

Baptism is important, however, from the simple fact that Christ commanded it. The design of baptism is plainly stated in the Scriptures. Christ declared that He possessed all authority, both in heaven and upon earth; therefore, it is not man's right to question His wisdom, design, or motive in giving the command to be baptized. One thing is certain: one's willingness and promptness to obey His commands proves the sincerity of his profession of Christ. Christ said: *"If ye love me, keep my commandments. . . . Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. . . . Why call ye*

me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (John 14:15; 15:14; Luke 6:46).

Dr. J. R. Graves pointed out well in *The Act of Christian Baptism*: "Of the 'all things whatsoever' Christ singles out, He mentions but one act as representative of all, and that act is baptism" (pages 5, 6). Before Christ began His personal ministry, He went to John the Baptist and received baptism at his hands. Christ made baptism a prerequisite to church membership and the initial act of a Christian life and service. No act of service to Christ is fully acceptable to Him if the initial act is not observed and obeyed.

The Scriptures make it plain that baptism must precede one's approach to the Lord's table. Until recent years that was admitted by all Christendom. The importance is prominently demonstrated. A church might, with just as much propriety, do away with the Lord's Supper as she might the ordinance of baptism.

The Act of Baptism

At least a majority of so-called churches admit that there can be no church membership without baptism; but some are very loose concerning the act, maintaining that if one's conscience is satisfied with the act, it is valid baptism. They seem to have the idea that God is circumscribed by the opinions of men. Such is

not the case! Christ, being the founder of His church, certainly had the right to stipulate the conditions of membership in her; that He has done with authority. It was just as commensurate with His divine authority to stipulate the act as it was for Him to specify the conditions of membership.

What act is required to constitute scriptural baptism? It has been conclusively shown that dipping is the act required to meet the requirements of baptism. Our English word *baptize* is a transliteration of the Greek *baptizo* (bap-TIDZ-oh). It now means, and always has meant, to dip, to plunge, to submerge.

What is known as the Authorized Version of the Scriptures was translated by a group of scholars appointed by King James I of England, an Anglican. One of the rules laid down by King James I to his translators was that "old ecclesiastical words" were to be kept, that is, not translated, but transliterated. Those were given a terminology similar to that of the original language.

That has given occasion to bitter theological battles on certain issues of doctrines, especially the one under consideration — baptism. By using the transliteration of a word, the meaning of which is obscure to many English speaking people, those who wished to propagate the errors of sprinkling and pouring for baptism would find less difficulty in doing so. Had the

word been translated there would have been no occasion or ground for such arguments.

If Matthew 3:1, 5 had been properly translated, it would have read thus: "In those days came John the Dipper. . . . Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all regions around about Jordan, and were dipped by him in Jordan, confessing their sins."

The Definition of Baptism

Scriptural baptism is the dipping into water of the believer in Jesus Christ in the name, or by the authority, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, by a church of Christ which is His only authorized agent to administer it.

As proof of the fact that dipping is the only proper act that will constitute baptism, the definitions given by leading Greek-English lexicographers are first offered. It is evident that to arrive at the true meaning of the terms *baptize* and *baptism*, one must go to the original source of the words, that is, the Greek language. The New Testament was originally written in that language.

Our first witnesses are classical Greek scholars. Though the New Testament was written in the *koinē* (koy-NAY), that is, the common vernacular of the language, the classical

meaning is inherent in the word in the New Testament Scriptures.

Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* has for baptism: "To dip in or under water." No one can misunderstand that definition; it is just a simple statement which gives the act of baptizing as a dipping or plunging under water. Only one literal or real definition is given. All the secondary or figurative definitions are built upon the idea of dipping into or under water.

Dr. Charles Anthon said, "*Baptizo* means to dip, or immerse; pouring and sprinkling are out of the question."

Now let us take some New Testament Greek lexicons and see what they say about the Greek word *baptizo*.

Grimm and Wilke's *Lexicon of New Testament Greek*:

(1) To immerse, submerge; (2) to wash or bathe by immersing or submerging, which [Wilke] says is the meaning of Mark 7:4, and in the cases of Naaman and Judith; *figuratively* to overwhelm as with debts, misfortunes, etc. In the New Testament rite, he says it denotes an immersion in water, intended as a sign of sins washed away, and received by those who wished to be admitted to the benefits of the Messiah's reign. No hint of its meaning anything else.

Cremer's *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of the New Testament Greek* says that the general meaning of the word in the New Testament is

“immerse, submerge.” He tells us that the Christian use of the word “denotes immersion, submersion, for a religious purpose.” There is no hint in any standard or recognized lexicon of the Greek language, either classical or New Testament, that *baptizo* ever means anything but to dip in or to plunge under water.

If the Lord had intended His disciples to have had water sprinkled upon them, He would have used *rantizo* (ran-TIDZ-oh) which means “to sprinkle.” If He had meant that they should have had water poured upon them, He would have used *chêo* (KAY-oh). Since He used a word that means to dip, to plunge, to submerge, it is evident that He meant for His disciples to be dipped.

Schleusner's *Lexicon of the New Testament* says, “*Baptizo* [means] properly to immerse and dip in, to immerse into water; and it answers to the Hebrew *taval* — II Kings 5:14.

“*Baptisma* [means] properly immersion, dipping into water, washing. Hence it is transferred to the sacred rite, which is called baptism, in which those formerly baptized were immersed in water.”

Leigh's *New Testament Greek Lexicon* states: “If we are willing to observe the import of the word, the term of baptism signifies immersion into water, or the act itself of immersing and washing off. Therefore, from the very name and etymology of the word, it appears

what would, in the beginning, be the custom of administering baptism, whilst we now have for baptism rather *rhantism* — that is, sprinkling.”

Stokius, a splendid authority, said, “Generally, and by force of the original, it denotes immersion, or dipping. Specially, properly, it denotes the immersion or dipping of a thing in water, that it may be cleansed or washed.”

Professor Sophocles, once a professor at Yale, and a native Greek said, “*Baptizo* [means] to dip, to immerse; sink, to be drowned [as the effect of sinking]. . . . [The figurative meaning is] to afflict; soak in liquor; to be drunk, intoxicated. There is no evidence that Luke or Paul, and the other writers of the New Testament, put upon the verb meanings not recognized by the Greeks.”

There is no need to multiply such definitions. Those are sufficient to convince all who wish to know the truth. When Christ and the New Testament writers used the word *baptize*, it meant “dip or immerse.” There is not a shadow of a doubt that the New Testament way of baptizing was by immersion, and all honest believers who desire to follow the example of their Lord will willingly submit to the act of immersion.

There is a general agreement among scholars of the classical Greek that the term *baptizo* always means to dip, to plunge under or into

water, but there are some others who have argued that the term took on a new meaning in the New Testament. To show the futility of that claim, I introduce two witnesses who were not Baptists:

(1) Morus said: "The principles of interpretation are common to sacred and ordinary writings, and the Scriptures are to be investigated by the same rules as other books."

(2) Moses Stuart, who was for thirty years professor in Andover Theological Seminary, said:

If the sacred Scriptures be a revelation to men, then they are to be read and understood by men. If the same laws of language are not observed in that revelation, as are common to men, then they have no guide to the right understanding of the Scriptures, and the interpreter needs inspiration as much as the original writer. It follows, of course, that the sacred Scriptures would be no revelation in themselves, nor of any use except to those who are inspired. But such a Book the sacred Scriptures are not, and nothing is more evident than that when God has spoken to men, He has spoken in the language of men, for He has spoken by men and for men.

We interpret the meaning of the Scriptures just as we interpret the meaning of the writings in any other book, that is, by the laws of the language in which the Scriptures have been written. One can understand the deep spiritual import of the Scriptures only by being illuminated by the Holy Spirit, or by having

his mind enlightened by Him, but the literal meaning of words obtain in the Scripture as in other books or writings.

The Design of Baptism

What is the design or purpose of baptism? Note first some negative arguments:

It is not to procure the remission of past sins. Christ did not propose two ways by which that blessing might be attained, nor is the offer of the blessing in the New Testament any different from that of the Old Testament. As proof we offer the statement of the apostle Peter, "*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins*" (Acts 10:43).

Baptism does not wash away our sins except in a figure. John said, "*The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*" (I John 1:7).

One is not regenerated in the act of baptism. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again (from above), he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3).

One is not made a child of God in or by baptism. "*Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:26). By being baptized, one "puts on" Christ; but he is not actually or literally united with Him by baptism.

Baptism is neither a means nor a sacrament by which one has access to Christ through whom alone one receives every needed grace. *"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God"* (Romans 5:1).

We are frequently asked, "Why be baptized, if baptism does not procure salvation?" Some, it seems, are interested in doing only that which is necessary to keep them out of the burning fires of hell; they are not interested, it appears from their actions, in rendering any sort of loving obedience to God for His wonderful blessings of grace.

There are good and sufficient reasons for a believer's being baptized. We list some of them:

It is an act of loving obedience to the command of Christ. Baptism, instead of being a procurative act by which one is saved, is an act by which the believer manifests his love in obedience to His divine command. When one, through the love of Christ, is freed from the power and bondage of sin, there is a desire to render a loving obedience. That is the way he manifests his love to Christ.

Baptism is an act of public confession of one's faith in and evidence of his friendship to Christ. Baptism is a profession of one's faith in

Christ's death, burial, and resurrection from the dead. It was by those that his salvation was procured. It is an imitation of Christ's own act which professes or confesses one's discipleship to Him. It manifests one's friendship to Him because it shows a willingness to do what He has commanded.

Baptism is, therefore, a declarative, not a procurative, ordinance. Not only does it profess one's faith in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, but it also professes one's faith that Christ will raise him from the dead. It, therefore, signifies the complete redemption of the disciples of Christ.

By obeying Christ in baptism, one honors Him. A believer honors Christ most, not by his words and lip professions, but by his loving and cheerful obedience to His commands. How sharply He reproved those who merely gave Him lip service when He said, "*Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me*" (Matthew 15:7, 8). What greater honor can one confer upon Christ than to render loving obedience to His commands?

Because of one's obedience to Christ in baptism, he secures many special blessings. David said that in the keeping of God's commands there are great rewards (Psalm 19:9-11). Those rewards come both in time and in eternity. If

one is the friend of Christ and the child of God, certainly he will desire to honor Him. When one honors Christ, Christ will honor him. Christ said, *"If any man serve me, him will my Father honour"* (John 12:26). What a blessedness to be honored both now in the presence of men and hereafter in the presence of angels. *"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. . . . Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord"* (John 14:23; 15:14; Matthew 25:21).

By baptism, one is qualified to be initiated into the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. By being initiated into a church, one is entitled to all her privileges and rights.

Baptism is the ceremonial initiative rite which is a prerequisite to membership in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. There can be no membership in a church of Christ without baptism; that is one element in its design. It is not proper to speak of baptism as being "the door" into the church. A church does not have doors like a material building. Baptism is not the only prerequisite to church membership. It is the only requirement of one who has been saved and who is in full accord with the doc-

trines and polity of a church.

The oldest Articles of Faith which we know anything about are those which were put forth in 1120. After stating in the seventh article that they regarded baptism as an outward sign of an inward act, they added: "And by this ordinance we are received into the holy congregation of God's people."

On the day of Pentecost, about three thousand were added to the church, following their baptism (Acts 2:41).

Paul said, "*By (in) one Spirit are we all baptized into one body*" (I Corinthians 12:13). In verse 27 of the same chapter he said, "*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*" The ceremonial rite that had brought them together in one body was, evidently, baptism.

The Requirements of Baptism

There are certain elements required to constitute scriptural baptism: (1) a scriptural authority, (2) a scriptural subject, (3) a scriptural act, (4) a scriptural administrator, and (5) a scriptural element. We note these very briefly.

A Scriptural Authority — The only scriptural authority for baptism is vested in a church of the Lord Jesus Christ. No individual, not even an ordained minister of the gospel, has authority from Christ to baptize without the

authority of a church behind him. Baptism is in the commission. The commission was given to a church, not to individuals or to the apostles as such. It is an inexcusable irregularity for anyone to administer the ordinance without the expressed authority of a church.

A Scriptural Subject — Only believers in Christ, those who have personally trusted Him for salvation, are scriptural subjects for baptism. The Scriptures teach that only regenerated persons can truly become members of the church. Since baptism is an initiatory rite for church membership, it logically follows that only regenerated persons are proper subjects for baptism.

A Scriptural Act — We have offered abundant evidence to substantiate the fact that only an immersion, or more properly, a dipping, constitutes the scriptural act for baptism. (See Romans 6:4.)

A Scriptural Administrator — Ordained ministers, those who have been called by the Holy Spirit and ordained by a church, those who have come under the imposition of the hands of a presbytery selected by a church for that specific purpose, are the scriptural agents of the churches to administer the ordinance of baptism.

A Scriptural Element — Water is the scriptural element into which qualified persons are to be baptizied. The phrase "*en hudati*" ("in

water'') denotes the scriptural element in baptism.

Churches cannot guard too scrupulously the ordinance of baptism because it is impossible to have a scriptural church without scriptural baptism. It is not here being argued that some degree of irregularity could not prevail and yet a scriptural church exist, but we are stressing the importance of keeping the ordinance in its scriptural order.

The Lord's Supper

The account of the institution of the Lord's Supper is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The apostle Paul gave instructions in I Corinthians as to its proper observance. Accounts of its observance are also in Acts.

Two things should be well fixed in one's mind. First, it is a *church* ordinance. It is not an ordinance to be observed by all Christians, regardless of church relation.

Second, it is to be observed only as a memorial of the Lord's death. It is not, as some would have it, a love feast. It has one primary design — to show the Lord's death until He comes.

We give here the account of its institution as stated in Matthew 26:26-29: "*As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said,*

Take, eat, this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament (covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

The other Gospel accounts are very similar in verbiage to that one; therefore, they are not here given. We now give Paul's statement relative to the institution of the Supper: "*I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament (covenant) in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come"*" (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

Many foolish ideas and heretical teachings have been held regarding the Supper. Some have argued that all the wine of the cup should be drunk because the Lord said, "Drink ye all of it." Jesus did not speak of the contents of the cup, but of the cup itself. "He took the cup,

and said, Drink ye all of it." They could not have drunk a cup, so what the Lord said was: "Drink ye all out of (from) it" or "All of ye drink of it."

The bread spoken of in connection with the Supper was unleavened. It is sinful to use any other than unleavened bread in the observance of the Lord's Supper. Leaven is symbolic of sin.

There have been strong contentions as to whether "the cup," that is, the element of drink, should be fermented wine or grape juice. The Lord spoke of the "fruit of the vine"; and it will, no doubt, never be definitely determined whether or not that was fermented. It is not the purpose of the author of this treatise to enter into a discussion of that phase of the subject, other than to say that it is his candid opinion that either pure grape wine or pure grape juice will answer the purpose of the element to be used.

It is likely very difficult, however, to obtain absolutely pure grape wine. Most wines that might be called grape wines are more than likely sweetened with cane or maple sugar; therefore, there would be a foreign element even in so-called grape wine. In order to have pure grape wine, it is necessary that there be no additive.

The matter should not be urged to the extent of provoking contentions and divisions among

the membership of a church. There is no positive command, so far as the writer has found, to use fermented wine. Jesus stipulated only the "fruit of the vine," and certainly pure grape juice will answer that specification.

No church, however, is privileged to substitute any other element in the place of the "fruit of the vine."

A Church Ordinance

One of the things which has been pointed out is that the Lord's Supper is definitely a church ordinance. It is not a denominational ordinance to be observed by Christians separate and apart from any church relationship. It can be observed only in a church capacity.

There have been occasions when, because of sickness, a member of the church was not privileged to meet with the church when the Supper was observed. The elements were taken to the sick one's home; he partook of the elements, and some called it observing the Lord's Supper. That was not observing the Lord's Supper because it was not done in church capacity. It would be altogether proper, however, for the church to congregate at such a home for the purpose of observing the ordinance. Just the meeting of a few "authorized members" or a "quorum" does not meet the specifications for its observance.

When the Lord instituted the Supper, only church members were present and partook of its elements. Paul was quite explicit in his instructions as to the observance of the Supper. He said to the church: "*When ye come together therefore into one place. . . .*" There must be but one body, and there must be oneness in the body. Christ had but one body. In I Corinthians 12 the church was likened to the body of Christ. The one loaf used in the Supper symbolizes the one body of Christ and the oneness of the particular body observing the Supper.

Only those whose conduct the church has a right to judge should partake of the Supper. They must be subject to the discipline of the participating church. To do otherwise is to observe the Supper in an unworthy manner. Churches, as in other things, have grown lax and indifferent as to the proper observance of the Lord's Supper.

A Restricted Ordinance

The Lord's Supper is a restricted ordinance. It is restricted in several respects. It is restricted, first, to membership in a scriptural church. Membership in a scriptural church presupposes the fact of regeneration. The one seeking to qualify as a participant in the Supper must be a saved person. Scriptural church membership presupposes that the one seeking

to qualify as a participant at the Lord's table has been scripturally baptized. A large majority of the sects today admit that baptism is a prerequisite to one's participation in the Lord's Supper. Until recent years all made that admission. It cannot be shown that any ever approached the Lord's table in New Testament times without their first having been scripturally baptized.

Baptists are usually referred to as "close communionists," but in reality their closeness is on baptism. They do not regard any as baptized who were not immersed by the authority of a scriptural church. Since it is admitted generally that baptism must precede one's approach to the Lord's table, Baptists do not invite those of other faiths to participate with them in the Supper. In that connection we quote a learned Methodist writer, Dr. Hibbard. His testimony is offered to show that fair-minded people, even of other faiths, do not accuse Baptists of bigotry and narrow-mindedness when they refuse to associate with others at the Lord's table.

It is but just to remark, that in one principle the Baptists and the Pedobaptist churches agree. They both agree in rejecting from communion at the table of the Lord, and in denying the rights of church fellowship to all who have not been baptized. Valid baptism they consider as essential to constitute visible church-membership. This, also, we hold. The only question then that here divides us is, what is essential to valid baptism?

The Baptists, in passing a sweeping sentence of disfranchisement upon all other Christian churches, have only acted upon a principle held in common with all other churches, viz.: that baptism is essential to church-membership. . . . Of course they must be their own judges as to what baptism is. It is evident that, according to our views, we can admit them to our communion; but with their views of baptism, it is equally evident, they can never reciprocate the courtesy; and the charge of *close communion* is no more applicable to the Baptists than to us; inasmuch as the question of church-membership is determined by as liberal principles as it is with any other Protestant churches — so far, I mean, as the present subject is concerned, i.e., it is determined by valid baptism (Hibbard's *Christian Baptism*, pp. 171, 175 — quoted from Pendleton).

Thus one of an opposing faith testifies to the reasonableness of the Baptist position; he admits that valid baptism is essential to one's approach to the Lord's table. The question hinges on, "What is valid baptism?" Methodists and others differ widely from Baptists on that question, but Baptists have the Bible to sustain their view. Others have their carnal reasoning.

The Lord's Supper is further restricted to unity in the church. Paul said in I Corinthians 11:18, 19: "*First of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.*" Before a church can properly

observe the Lord's Supper, there must be unity in the church; there must be no divisions or heresies in the church. If there are such, they must be removed before the church is in a proper attitude to observe the Supper.

The Supper is restricted to those who maintain proper deportment as Christians. From I Corinthians 5:11 we read: "*Now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*" Other passages could be cited along that line, but one inspired passage is considered sufficient for the purpose here. It is a shame that such base characters as are mentioned in the passage boldly and with great effrontery approach the table of the Lord to commemorate His death and sufferings! Churches should put their stamp of disapproval in unmistakable terms upon such practices. When such exists, discipline is called for before the observance of the Lord's Supper.

There is at least one more restriction; the individual church member is to examine himself. If he finds something in his life contrary to the will of God concerning his Christian deportment or to the faith of the gospel, he should not approach the Lord's table until he has made the proper amends. Some think that is the only restriction to the approach to the table of the

Lord, but it is just one of the many. The apostle proceeded to instruct believers that if they would thus judge themselves they would save their being judged by the church. They would also escape the chastisement of the Lord. (See I Corinthians 11:28-32.)

Some False Conceptions

There are those who speak of the Lord's Supper as a "sacrament." We often see, in announcements of services and sermon topics, that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper will be observed at the conclusion of the service. A sacrament is a "sign or pledge of grace." The Supper is no more a sacrament than is baptism. A sacrament carries with it the idea that it is essential to one's obtaining the grace of God. Baptists do not observe the Supper of the Lord in order to obtain His grace; they do it to show forth His grace which he shed forth in His death.

There are those who speak of it as a "communion service," meaning usually that, in some mysterious way, they commune with the saints. It is not in reference to each other that believers are to observe the Supper; it is in reference to the Lord's death. There is a sense in which it is a "communion service," but it is not a communion with each other as brethren. *"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not*

the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (I Corinthians 10:16). It is a communion of the blood and body of Christ, and not with each other as brethren.

Some hold to the transubstantiation theory. According to both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox dogma, the bread and the wine at their "consecration" become the body and blood of Christ. The elements only retain the appearances of bread and wine.

Christ did say of the bread, "This is My body" and of the wine, "This is My blood," but He no more meant that those elements were changed into His veritable body than He meant in John 15 that He himself was literally a vine, and His disciples were literally branches.

The theory is not only unscriptural; it is also preposterous. Such a view has encouraged superstitious fear. It has led to the withholding of the symbol of Christ's blood from the people; only the priests partake of the wine.

Others follow the consubstantiation theory. That theory is held by Lutherans and probably others; but it is just as untenable as the transubstantiation theory, though it is not quite so bold. It means that Christ is somehow present in the emblems; the emblems are not changed into the veritable body and blood of Christ,

but He is somehow mysteriously present with them. Even though not quite so bold a heresy, in substance it amounts almost to the same thing as transubstantiation.

It is the one who is participating in the Supper that Christ is with, and not the elements as such.

We very briefly state some of the absurdities of the above theories:

a. It is absurd to think of one substance's being another, or in or with another, in the sense of affinity. It is, therefore, ridiculous to think as one holds a morsel of the bread of the Supper in his hand, knowing that it is bread, to say he is holding the actual body of Christ, or that Christ is with that morsel.

b. It is absurd to think that a thing is not itself — the body of Christ, for example. When He spoke the words "this is My body," He was in His body, and certainly He did not fancy His handing His body to the disciples to eat. If that were true, it would follow that:

c. A part of the whole is, at the same time, the whole of which it is only a part. If the whole loaf is the body and each broken morsel of the loaf is also the body of Christ, how many bodies does He have? For instance, a number of Catholic priests are likely to be celebrating the Holy Eucharist at the same time. When they break the loaf and recite their ceremony, it would make Christ have a number of bodies.

d. It makes a thing that is one, and only one, be at the same time more than one.

e. It makes a thing, which is by its very essence limited to one place, be at the same time unlimited as to place. How foolish. For example, Christ's literal body would be at the Vatican in Rome, and in every Catholic "church" in the world, if they were taking the "sacrament" at the same time.

f. The absurdity is that the ability of the soul to perceive, operating through the senses of the body, while those senses are perfectly normal and active, may, at the same time, be hopelessly and absolutely deceived.

Imagine trying to make yourself believe that after one has eaten a morsel of the bread at the Lord's table he has the Lord's body in his stomach. Such is calculated to produce skepticism of the rankest sort. By what reasoning can one conclude that his soul can be conscious of the presence of the Lord's body when he takes the bread, or the blood when he drinks of the cup? The doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation are ridiculous on the very face of them, but they show to what depths of deception people may be led. May God have mercy upon those who are thus duped by ungodly and scheming men!

The Design of the Supper

The true purpose of the Supper is to proclaim

the Lord's death. He commanded that it be observed until He comes. Nothing should bring a feeling of greater solemnity or humility to believers than when they gather around the table of the Lord to partake of those emblems that represent His body and blood. As they partake of them they should see nothing (they should have nothing in their minds) that would dim faith's view of the suffering Lord as He bowed His head and died upon Golgotha's cross.

To have any other design in view is to take the Supper in an unworthy manner, and thus to condemn oneself before the world. When the proper design is lost in the observance of the Lord's Supper, all kinds of evil things are likely to be indulged. That was the case with the church at Corinth when they received such a scathing rebuke from Paul. (See I Corinthians 11.)

An Exhortation

Every member of a church should observe the Lord's Supper. If some are not qualified because of their ungodly walk, the New Testament gives the remedy. A church should demand a walk of her membership so as not to be embarrassed to see any member partake of the sacred elements.

Some have said that they did not feel worthy, and that they were fearful that if they

partook of the Supper they would violate Paul's injunction when he said: "*He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*"

The word *damnation* in the King James Version should have been translated as it is rendered in the American Standard Version, *judgment*. It does not mean that one who does that will be lost, but the reason is given that in so doing he does not discern the Lord's body. For that he will be judged.

If one should feel worthy to take the Supper, he, of all people, should be the first to refuse to take it. No one, who feels as he should, feels worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper. "Unworthily" has reference to the manner of its observance. Distinguish between "unworthy" and "unworthily."

One is under just as great an obligation to observe the Supper as he is to be baptized. The command comes with just as great authority as does the other. The church that does not, at stated and regular intervals, observe the Lord's Supper and thereby proclaim His death to the world is violating a plain command of the head of the church. May a church expect the blessings of the Lord upon her while in disobedience to His divine commands? The church that is neglecting that duty is living beneath her privileges, for there is great

blessing in performing that, as well as every other duty.

The disposition of the churches to neglect that duty only shows the tendency of the age in which we live. There is as much laxity along the line of other duties as there is in the observance of the Lord's Supper.

May our churches be awakened from their lethargy, and may they honor their Lord in the observance of His command.

6

Church Polity

Government is an essential factor in all kinds of institutions in which human beings have relations. Anything that exists, whether in the material, mental, or spiritual realm, has laws governing its existence. There must be an established condition to the existence of everything. That is its government. The churches of Jesus Christ are no exception to the rule.

Human governments are of divine appointment, but one would not speak of human governments as being divine governments. The government of the church is divine because, speaking institutionally, it is as much of Christ as the church herself is of Christ.

Some have said that there are three forms of church government, but there is only one kind. There is one form of church government: congregational or democratic. There are two forms of government in man-made institutions called churches: episcopal and presbyterian.

The episcopal form of government recognizes the right of a bishop to rule or to preside over a certain territory or district. That form of government recognizes three orders in the ministry — deacons, elders, and bishops. The bishop is the commander-in-chief of the whole. The idea rests upon a wrong interpretation of the term *bishop*. Those who hold to the idea maintain that “elders” and “deacons” constitute a class of the clergy inferior to that of “bishop,” and that the authority to ordain and to rule belongs to the bishop. The Scriptures do not support such a theory.

Paul, in instructing the elders of the church at Ephesus, said, “*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood*” (Acts 20:28). It was the elders whom Paul was addressing. “*From Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church*” (Acts 20:17). Paul called those elders the “overseers” of the flock, or church of Christ, at Ephesus. The word *overseers* is from the Greek word *episcopos* which

is translated "bishop." "Elder" and "bishop" signify the same office in the New Testament. That refutes the idea that "bishops" are a superior class of the clergy.

Apparently the idea of a hierarchy existed in New Testament times. From several passages of Scripture, even as early as Acts 20, it is clearly manifested. For example, note the message of Christ to the churches at Ephesus (Revelation 2:6) and at Pergamos (Revelation 2:15). From that idea there has developed the unscriptural custom of differentiating among the elders and differentiating between the ministry and the people who do not belong to the ministry — the "clergy" and the "laity." Terms like "laity" and "laymen" do not belong in Baptist nomenclature. They should be dropped. By using those terms, Baptists make too great a concession to the claim of the errorists who make a distinction in the coercive authority of the clergy and the members of the congregations.

The term *laity* means "the people." It is derived from the Greek *laos*. Are not the clergy people also? No passage of Scripture makes a distinction between elders, or preachers, and members who are not preachers as is suggested by the terms *clergy* and *laity*, as used by the erroneous sects.

The term *Nicolaitanes*, as found in Revelation 2:6, 15, suggests the origin of the idea.

That word is derived from two words in the Greek — *nicao*, meaning “to conquer or to rule,” and *laos*, meaning “the people.” There was then a class who sought, and taught, the right of the elders to rule the people coercively. That gave rise to the doctrine and practice.

The presbyterian form of government is a somewhat milder form of ecclesiastical government, but it is an erroneous one. It recognizes two classes of elders: preaching elders and ruling elders. The pastor and ruling elders of a Presbyterian congregation constitute what is termed “the session of the church.” The session transacts all the business of the church; it receives, dismisses, and excludes members.

The Presbytery is a court composed of the sessions of all the Presbyterian congregations in a given district. If one is dissatisfied with the decision of the session, he may appeal to the Presbytery. If he is not satisfied with the decision of the Presbytery, he may appeal to the Synod, which is a council composed of several presbyters. From the decisions of the Synod, appeal may be made to the General Assembly, which is the highest court. That kind of ecclesiastical government is without scriptural foundation. There is neither precept nor example for it in the New Testament. The council at Jerusalem was not after that order at all. It was merely a meeting of representatives from different churches to counsel

concerning the matter of the Gentiles' being required to keep the law of Moses.

The congregational form of church government is built upon (1) independence or autonomy, (2) executive rights, (3) majority rule, and (4) church authority.

Independence or Autonomy

Each church has the right to govern herself according to the laws given by her head and lawgiver — Christ. A church is amenable to none but Christ. She cannot be called in question by an association, a convention, a synod, or a conference. Her acts are final; there are no appeals from her decisions. The church is subject to Jesus Christ, her head and lawgiver; to Him she must give account. It is to Him and to Him only that she is amenable for her acts and teachings.

There are three branches of government — *legislative*, the authority to make laws; *judicial*, the authority to judge by the law and also to judge the constitutionality of the laws; and *executive*, the authority to enforce or put into operation the laws.

Of the three branches of government, the church possesses only two — the judicial and executive. Her judicial authority is limited, for she has no right to question the wisdom or constitutionality of the laws of Christ. She may sit

in judgment as to whether or not her members adhere to the laws of Christ. She may judge her ministers as to whether or not they preach the pure Word of God. All similar judgments come under her province.

It is the church's duty to execute the will of her risen Lord. There is a greater prominence given in the Scriptures to the executive function of the church than is given to the judicial. Some have referred to the church as the executive institution of the kingdom of Christ. Since certain judicial and executive privileges have been given to the church by Christ, she should as diligently refrain from presuming to legislate in kingdom affairs as she exercises her God-given privileges.

A church has no right to make any sort of law relative to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament is her all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. She needs no other laws to expedite her work in the world. If she presumes to become a legislative institution, she will soon find that her work is hampered. Strife, discord, and contention will soon be the outgrowth of such a practice. Let the churches of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ solemnly remember that they are not law-making institutions. It is their sacred prerogative to prosecute, to their fullest extent or powers, the laws and the work given them by the great head of the church.

Even though the church is an independent and autonomous institution, she is not a sovereign institution. The church is independent and autonomous in exercising the rights and privileges given her by her divine head, but she is amenable to the great head of the church — Christ Jesus. A sovereign is amenable to no one. Christ is the sovereign of His churches. No church is sovereign in any realm.

The fact that a church is lacking in at least one of the governmental branches is conclusive evidence that she is not sovereign. A sovereign makes his laws; he is himself the judge of his law, and he is himself the executive of his law. He is himself the government.

In that connection, I call attention to a statement made by the author of *The Apostolic Church*. In his introductory statements in a chapter on "The Sovereignty of the Church," he said:

I use the term, "sovereignty," in an extremely limited sense, to express the highest power which the church may exercise. Strictly speaking, the church possesses no sovereignty whatever — not even in the sense in which we say that a state is sovereign, implying its power to choose its form of government, to alter or abolish the same at pleasure, and to enact laws and regulations under its own constitution (page 193).

If the brother was right in saying that in the strict sense the church does not possess sover-

eignty, and he was, why speak or write of that which the church does not possess? Let us call the prerogative by its right name — independence, or autonomy.

Another thing should be noted in that connection. Sovereign power is inherent in the sovereign himself, whereas the authority of a church is only an acquired, a given, or a bequeathed power. The authority of a church is not inherent in herself; it is inherent in her sovereign Lord.

Executive Rights

The churches are the executives of the kingdom of Christ. That authority rests in the churches — not in the ministry, or in a class of ruling elders, boards, or any such things. In proportion to his ability and spiritual endowment, the executive authority of a church of Jesus Christ rests upon the “least” member of a church as upon the “greatest.” The “least” member in a church has just as much voice in the transactions of the affairs of the church as does the “greatest” member.

Equal rights to all and special privileges to none is the substance of the divine law in the governmental prerogatives of a church of Christ. Jesus taught the doctrine of equality among the churches as well as equality among

the members of the churches. One class of members cannot lord it over another class.

In keeping with that maxim or law of Christ to His churches note the following:

The New Testament churches received members into their fellowship. It was not with them as it is with some so-called churches of our day. Some ministers receive into the fellowship of the church those whom they desire, but the New Testament congregation itself received the members.

Paul wrote: *"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations"* (Romans 14:1).

That is a positive command of an apostle to a church of Jesus Christ to receive "him that is weak in the faith." If the modern conception of many so-called churches be true, why did not Paul receive "him that is weak in the faith" himself? Why did he command the church at Rome to do the receiving? That was not his prerogative; it belonged to the church. Some may contend that that had no reference to the reception of members into the fellowship of a church. Let them tell us then to what it does refer. The writer asserts that is what it means, or refers to. A new convert exactly fits the case. He is weak in the faith.

Many have been known to have been received into a church when doubts were expressed as to the wisdom of the act. That was

what Paul was warning against. If there is sufficient doubt to warrant a conclusion that an individual is unsaved, do not receive him; otherwise, receive him; and then, instead of expressing doubts concerning him, give him every encouragement possible to aid his Christian growth and development. If Paul, then, would command the church at Rome to receive a member into her fellowship, would he not issue the same command to Baptist churches today? It is evident that the command was issued to the church at Rome, and not to the session or to the ruling elders or to a bishop.

The Scriptures also teach that the New Testament churches had, and did exercise, the right to withdraw from those whom they deemed unworthy to be retained in their fellowship. As an example, we cite I Corinthians 5:1-5. There was the case of an incestuous man who had his father's wife. Paul commanded the church at Corinth to exclude the man. *"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."*

Why did not Paul excommunicate the incestuous man? He did not have the authority to do so; that authority rested in the church to whom it was given by Christ himself.

Commands were given to New Testament churches to withdraw from disorderly members. A command to do a thing implies the right to do it. Paul commanded the church at Corinth to exclude the incestuous man; the church exercised her right in doing so.

We find also other commands of like nature, though not in such specific cases. Paul said to the church at Thessalonica, "*Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us*" (II Thessalonians 3:6). There was a positive command to a church to withdraw from disorderly members. The command implies the right of the church to obey, or why would such be given?

From the same chapter one may note, "*If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed*" (verse 14). If a church refuses to "company" with a man, she refuses his fellowship; she excludes him from her fellowship.

The right or authority of a church to exclude members implies also the authority to restore them to the fellowship. The man who was excluded from the church, as recorded in I Corinthians 5, was restored, or Paul admonished that he be restored, to fellowship. "*Sufficient*

to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of many (literally, by the majority). So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him" (II Corinthians 2:6-8).

When Paul first commanded the church to withdraw from the man, he said, "When you are gathered together," implying that it was necessary for them to be in church capacity. In the second instance, when Paul admonished that the man be forgiven, he told the church that the punishment which was inflicted by the majority was sufficient, and that the man should be forgiven by the same church — not by a minister, a bishop, a ruling elder, or a session. Churches have a right to receive, to dismiss, or to exclude members.

New Testament churches had the authority to choose their own officials. That is proved by the account of the Jerusalem church's choosing Matthias to take the apostleship of Judas (Acts 1:15-26). In that passage the apostle Peter expressed the necessity of the one's being chosen as a witness of the resurrection of Christ. The congregation, when assembled in church capacity, nominated two men. They then engaged in prayer in which they asked the Lord to show them which one was His choice. They then cast lots, and the lot fell upon

Matthias. He was numbered with the apostles.

If that had been a modern, man-made church, the bishop would have appointed a successor to Judas; or the session, synod, general assembly, or conference would have filled the vacancy. Since it was a New Testament church, the action was carried out in the New Testament way.

Acts 6 gives the account of the church choosing the first deacons. The apostles did not choose the deacons; nor did they, so far as the record shows, even suggest who they should be. They said, "*Look ye out among you seven men.*" The apostles knew that the church was privileged to elect her own officers.

Missionaries are not officers of a church, but New Testament churches did send missionaries. The church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas as missionaries (Acts 13). The Jerusalem church had sent Barnabas to go as far as Antioch (Acts 11:22).

Paul and Barnabas "*ordained them elders in every church.*" That does not mean that Paul and Barnabas acted as modern bishops. The churches, by a show of the hands, elected elders whom Paul and Barnabas ordained. That is proved by the original Greek.

It is the divine and inalienable right of the churches of Christ to receive into their fellowship those who have been saved. It is also their right to dismiss from their fellowship those

who walk disorderly. It is their right to choose their own officials. It is not the right of a conference, or any other ecclesiastical body, to send churches their pastors or other officials.

It is the sole responsibility of the church to carry out or to execute the will of Christ as expressed in the Commission (Matthew 28:19, 20; Luke 24:47, 48; Acts 1:8). The responsibility of preaching and of making disciples was not placed merely upon the shoulders of the ministry, but upon the church.

The church was authorized to make disciples, to baptize them, and to teach them to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded (Matthew 28:18-20). The substance of the preaching was given — “*repentance and remission of sins*” (Luke 24:47). The church was empowered by the Holy Spirit to do that which the Lord had commanded — to be “witnesses to the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Ministers and missionaries are only the agents of the churches in carrying out the commission. They are under responsibility, to be sure, but it is because they are members of the church of Christ. God has called them to that specific duty.

Majority Rule

In the case of the incestuous man, noted in I Corinthians 5 and II Corinthians 2, the pun-

ishment was inflicted by the "many" as stated in the King James Version; but literally it means "by the majority." In the selection of Matthias to take the place of Judas it appears very likely that the vote was not unanimous; but the majority voted for him, and he was elected to take part in the apostleship from which Judas, by transgression, had fallen. The minority should always be willing to yield to the wishes of the majority. If the majority should be wrong, it will ultimately come to light and the proper corrections may be made. For one to be unwilling to go with the majority shows the wrong disposition.

To show that the minority is willing to bow to the will of the majority, it is usually the custom for churches to make a vote unanimous. Some, perhaps, misunderstand what is meant by making a vote unanimous. They think that it implies that those in the minority all at once change their minds and agree with the majority. The decision to which the minority is willing to submit is not the true import. It only implies that the minority is ready to accept the will of the majority. Those in the minority may be of the same opinion as before making the vote unanimous.

Church Authority

Church action is final; there is no other ecclesiastical authority above a church.

One church cannot transfer or alienate her authority to another. The church at Corinth could not transfer her power or authority to the one at Ephesus; neither can a church or a group of churches transfer their authority to a convention, association, synod, conference, or a general assembly of any nature. The authority of a church is a sacred trust committed to her by her lord and head. She has no right to transfer that authority to any other. To do so would be to surrender a fundamental property of a church of Christ — that of independence or autonomy.

A church of Jesus Christ cannot, without surrendering a God-given heritage, redelegate or recommit her authority to boards, committees, or individuals. Because churches appoint committees, and because a committee is a person or persons to whom something is committed, some reason that a church may recommit her authority. Granting that a committee is a person or persons to whom something is committed, it cannot be successfully argued that authority is that which is committed. The authority of the church must ever remain in the congregation, or she ceases to be a church of the New Testament order.

There are accounts of churches in the New Testament sending messengers, and to those messengers messages were evidently committed; but no authority was committed to them.

When they had delivered the messages, their responsibility was fulfilled, as they had no authority to enforce whatever terms may have been specified in their message.

Churches invite presbyteries to assist in ordaining ministers; but, properly speaking, the ordaining is done by the church. The presbytery only acts for the church. It does that which the church stipulates. A church may select a building committee, but the committee does not build a church house; the committee acts only as an agent for the church. A church selects a pastor, and the pastor baptizes converts who ask for admission into the fellowship of the church. A church sends messengers to an association; those messengers are only committees for the church. They can do only what the church sends them to do. They cannot, by their own wills and acts, bind the church that sent them.

The action of a church is final. There is no higher ecclesiastical authority than a church. There is no higher court on earth to which one can go. Churches may make mistakes in their judicial acts, but they can be called in question by no earthly tribunal; they are amenable only to Christ, their lord and head. When one is not satisfied with their decisions, appeals from the actions of churches cannot be made to associations, conventions, assemblies, synods, or conferences.

That, however, should not fill a church with a spirit of pride. Churches are responsible to Christ, their Lord. To Him they must account. They should be very careful that they use the authority which Christ gave them to His honor and glory, and for the best interests of His cause. Great harm may result from an abuse of the authority given them. Some churches, with the thought that they are amenable to no earthly authority, may have abused their authority. Such is sinful.

The authority given by Christ is that the churches might prosecute the greatest work on earth; therefore, great care should be taken as to its exercise.

7

The Discipline of a Church

Discipline is an essential element in any phase of life. Homes, schools, counties, states, nations, churches, all need discipline. Discipline is not only necessary in aggregations, but it is also necessary in the lives and work of individuals. A person disciplines himself; every individual has some sort of discipline. Some individuals have a poor system for their lives; nevertheless, they have some system. It may be, as some would say, a "happy go lucky" system. If one will discipline himself, he will be

more successful in life. One needs a good system of order in all that he does.

Churches are composed of redeemed but imperfect human beings. There are likely to be misunderstandings, strifes, and contentions; therefore, even punitive discipline is necessary in the government of a church.

In the present discussion, church discipline is divided into two classes: (1) cultural and (2) punitive, or corrective.

Cultural Discipline

We often speak of people as being cultured. Christians should, of all people, be the most cultured and refined. We do not mean necessarily that they should be cultured in the ways of worldly society, but that they should be cultured in the true sense of the word. The Christian religion is of such a nature as to bring out the best traits of character possible for a human being, but the elements which go to make up a Christian character must be cultivated.

The farmer finds it necessary to cultivate the useful plants on his farm, whereas the grass and obnoxious weeds will grow without cultivation. The elements of a Christian character must be cultivated. In regeneration love is shed abroad or implanted in the believer's heart, but one should cultivate that love and weed out the disposition of hatred and envy.

Psalm 1 wonderfully illustrates cultural discipline. David said, *"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."*

Shunning ungodly counsel, refusing to be identified with sinners, and detaching oneself from the scornful are all spiritual exercises in cultural discipline. By one's so doing, the elements of Christian character implanted in his heart by regeneration are cultivated and given an opportunity to grow and to shine out of his life.

Another act of spiritual exercise whereby the elements of Christian character are given an opportunity of expansion is meditation upon the Word of God, which is His expression of His will for His children. To meditate is to ponder, to think much and continuously. Believers need to do a great deal of meditating upon the law of God. As they do so, they will find themselves being drawn closer to Him in thought, word, and act. He who meditates upon the Word of God will be living close to the source of his spiritual sustenance. The person

who does so will be found as pictured by David (Psalm 1:3).

God gave some of the churches apostles; to others He gave prophets; and to some He gave teachers (Ephesians 4:11). In verses 12, 13 the apostle Paul assigned the reason, "*For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*" That is another fine example of cultural discipline.

Those gifts were given to the churches that the saints might be perfect (complete) — nothing lacking, that they might be what God desires that they should be. No saint is complete without knowledge and activity. Life will certainly be active; Christians are alive. Their activities certainly should be in conformity to the life which they have in Christ. That cannot be true without a sufficient knowledge of God's will to conform the life thereto. The Lord said through Hosea, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*" (4:6). They need to know more of God and of His Word. They need to conform their lives or activities to His will as a result of that knowledge. That is cultural discipline.

In Ephesians 2:21 is another statement regarding cultural discipline, "*In (Jesus Christ)*

all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."

The Lord is pleased for His churches to make progress in Him. He wants them to grow; He is not pleased with His churches if they retrograde or if they merely stand still. Churches should be possessed by a spirit of true aggressiveness and progressiveness.

The words of a great leader in Israel help to illustrate the point. Moses said, "Stand still and see the salvation of God." He then said, at the command of God, "Go forward." There may be times when churches need to "stand still," that is, to wait until they know the will of the Lord. When they have ascertained His will, they should faithfully perform it by going forward in His work.

A new convert who becomes a member of a church is a "babe in Christ," but he should not remain a babe; he should be led by the church to cultivate the Christian graces so that he will develop into a stalwart soldier for Christ. Paul reprimanded some members of an early church because they remained babes. They had to be fed the pure milk of the Word when they should have been able to have endured the strong meat of it; they had continually to be taught the first principles. Something is wrong when a child remains too long in the primer at school; something must be wrong when God's

children remain too long in the primer of God's Word and work.

In the Great Commission Jesus commanded His churches to "teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." That is cultural discipline. As believers observe the "all things," they will be developing in the spiritual life.

Churches have two fine means of providing cultural discipline. They are the Sunday School and the Training Service. In the Sunday School pupils learn; in the Training Service they put into practice that which they learn. They learn also in the Training Service, but the special value of that auxiliary is to train workers. The prayer service also has a training value. It affords opportunity for the members to express themselves in public testimony and also to lead public prayer, both of which are conducive to Christian growth and development.

One other passage should be noticed before passing this phase of the subject. Look at Philippians 2:12, 13, *"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."*

God works inwardly. A saved person works outwardly what God works inwardly. God creates the disposition in believers to do His will, but they should follow that disposition. As they work out their salvation, they are exercising cultural discipline. God does His work through the Holy Spirit. Every human disposition to do God's will is the result of the Holy Spirit's work in one's heart, for the carnal mind does not dispose any person to do the will of God.

Obedying the impulses of the Spirit is very profitable because it develops Christian character. Paul said, "*Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things*" (I Timothy 4:8). Godly exercise is profitable not only in this life but also in the life which is to come. The proper exercise of cultural discipline will prepare believers as servants of Christ to receive a rich reward.

Punitive, or Corrective, Discipline

Punitive, or corrective, discipline is an essential factor in the government of the churches of Christ. Even the apostles, during the personal ministry of Christ, allowed their carnal dispositions to get the upper hand of them. They did some unbecoming things. Jesus turned the apostle Peter over to Satan for a sifting. We are not told just what that sifting was, but it

caused Peter to perceive his weakness and to look to his Lord for strength and guidance.

On another occasion two of the apostles coveted a position of authority in the kingdom of Christ. That brought a rather severe reprimand from the Lord.

The Lord turned Peter over to Satan for a sifting and reprimanded James and John, not because He did not love them, but to correct their faults and erroneous ideas. Any act in the providence of God that will enable an individual to see and to correct his faults is certainly an act of mercy which will yield very beneficial results.

Churches have grown to be rather indifferent and negligent regarding corrective discipline. The results of the neglect are unsatisfactory. So many church members live so worldly that the influence of the church for good is not so great as it should be. Punitive discipline should be exercised, without fear or favor upon all who violate the sacred injunctions of the Scriptures relative to Christian deportment. If that were sacredly performed, the church would have much greater influence for good in any community and in the world at large.

No command of the Lord to His churches can be violated or treated lightly without injury to the churches. Churches have seriously handicapped themselves because of dereliction in that duty. Jesus positively commanded His

churches to exercise punitive discipline. Jesus gave a command as to how to deal with a certain class of disorder (Matthew 18:15-19).

The epistles of Paul deal more specifically with that class of discipline than any of the other scriptures. Paul was inspired, and whatever command Paul or any other divinely inspired writer gave is equal to a command from the lips of the Lord himself.

Paul gave command relative to a church's dealing with an incestuous man (I Corinthians 5). He gave command as to the same church's attitude toward the man after his repentance (II Corinthians 2). Paul gave specific command for the church to withdraw from the disorderly and to have no company with the disobedient (II Thessalonians 3:6, 14). Such plain and positive commands cannot be ignored without hurting the influence of and creating disrespect for a church.

Paul commanded the Ephesian church to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them (Ephesians 5:11). That reproofing was for the purpose of correcting those who were walking in fellowship with the world. It is an example of punitive discipline.

One of the best means by which a church member may escape the punitive discipline of the church is to exercise self-judgment. Paul said that if one would judge himself he should

not be judged (I Corinthians 11:31). When one fails to judge himself, he is chastened of the Lord. The church withdraws from the disobedient and worldly, and the Lord sometimes turns them over to Satan for a sifting as He did Peter.

Two Classes of Offenses

Two kinds of evil acts or dispositions give offense to a church — the personal offense and the general, or public, offense.

The Personal Offense

Jesus dealt with that specific class of offenses (Matthew 18:15-19). If the Lord's instructions had always been carried out, they would have saved many churches serious strifes and divisions. Personal offenses sometimes become general offenses; but if care were always taken to do what the Lord taught, there would be no need of that becoming the case.

Sometimes one brother offends another. Often the offense is more imaginary than real; nevertheless, a brother is offended. Occasionally one brother mistreats or transgresses against a brother. The Lord taught that when a brother is offended he should tell the offender of his fault. The offended and the offender only

should consult, but the opposite is usually true. The offended party usually wants the offender to make the first approach.

Jesus taught that the offended party should make the first approach toward reconciliation. If that instruction were faithfully followed, it would seldom be necessary for any others to know anything about an offense. The two together could make the proper adjustments of their difficulties. It might be that the offender does not even know that he has offended anyone. In most cases, if the instructions of the Lord were carried out, reconciliation could be effected without any kind of public affair being made of it.

If the offended party goes to the offender and he cannot make the proper adjustment, he is to take one or two with him that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. Often by the counsel of disinterested parties a reconciliation may be effected. If such is not the case, and if it be found that the offender has truly acted in an unchristian manner toward his brother and will not make the proper amends, the matter is to be taken to the church.

If he then refuses to hear the church and to make proper amends to his brother, the church is to withdraw from him; or as Jesus put it, *"Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican"* (Matthew 18:17). When a church

acts strictly according to the instructions of the Lord, she has His assurance that the action is "bound in heaven." God's divine approval will rest upon the action of the church.

Public, or General, Offenses

Some offenses do not offend any individual in particular, but they do offend all the members in general; therefore, they are called general, or public, offenses. Drunkenness, fornication, revelry, and such like constitute what are known as public or general offenses. When such things are committed, no one member is wronged or offended more than any other. The whole church is offended because Christ's law or will has been transgressed. When such sins have been committed, it is the duty of a church, in case the offender does not make the proper amends, to charge the guilty member with misconduct and to deal with him according to his conduct.

What course should be pursued by a church when a public offense has been committed?

When such offense has been committed, it is the duty of some member of the church, who has substantial evidence of the guilt of the party, to inform the church of the fact; he should then move that the church prefer charges against the offender. When the church has preferred charges against a guilty party, the clerk,

or some member of the church, should be authorized to inform the accused of the action of the church so that he will have ample opportunity to go to the church to make acknowledgments, if he desires to do so. If he does not so desire, he can inform the church that he does not care to make any acknowledgments. If that is the case, the church should withdraw from him.

If the church so desires, when she is convinced of the guilt of the accused, she may withdraw fellowship; and then, if the guilty one feels condemned and wants to be restored to the fellowship, he may go to the church, make the proper acknowledgments, and be restored to the full fellowship of the church. The church will act entirely within her rights if she takes such procedure. No harm is done, however, if she first prefers charges and then gives the guilty member an opportunity to make acknowledgments and be forgiven without the embarrassment of being excluded.

A member who is guilty of such public offenses should have enough of the grace of God in his heart to prompt him to go to the church, before any charge is preferred, to acknowledge his guilt and to ask her forgiveness. If such a one is a child of God, the Lord will cause him to realize his guilt before the church has time to act.

The writer has personal knowledge of indi-

viduals who were guilty of some public sin who went to the church of which they were members and made acknowledgments when the church did not even know they were guilty; she might never have known it, but for the fact that the guilty parties confessed it. The Lord sent such pungent conviction to their hearts that there was no rest until they had confessed their guilt. Such a course on the part of one who has committed a public offense is very commendable. It is good evidence that the Lord has dealt with an individual and made him to feel his guilt. It is also an indication that he desires to get himself right.

No scripture authorizes a church to appoint a committee to visit an offending member to try to get him reconciled to the church. When such is done, it is just an act of mercy on the part of the church. Even in personal offenses the church does not appoint a committee. The offended party may take one or two with him to try to effect reconciliation with the offender, but the church has nothing to do with it until after the offended party has failed to make reconciliation and the fact is reported to the church. Committees sometimes hinder rather than help in making reconciliations in either public or personal offenses.

All church members are liable to err in their deportment. When they do, they should not allow Satan to fill their hearts with arrogance

and pride to such an extent that they will not confess their mistake and make due acknowledgment to the church.

Public or general offenses may be classified under three heads: (1) heresy, (2) disturbance of the peace and harmony of a church, (3) disorderly or immoral conduct.

Heresy — Heresy is the imbibing of false doctrines. The Scriptures warn of heretics. They are often Satan's tools to draw people away from the truths of the Word of God, or the doctrines of Christ.

Paul gave the following instruction, "*A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself*" (Titus 3:10, 11). A person might be in error concerning some doctrine and yet not be a heretic in the true sense of the word. After the proper admonition many may give up their false views and teachings; but if one is persistent in teaching heresy, he should be, as the apostle admonished, rejected or excluded.

If a church allows a heretic to retain membership and at the same time to teach his heretical doctrines, a divided church will more than likely be the result. Some will follow his teaching; factions will arise in the church and bring in hurtful divisions. The apostle Paul admonished the church at Rome to avoid those who

caused divisions (Romans 16:17). It is always well to adhere to that admonition.

Disturbance of the Peace and Harmony of a Church — The Scriptures teach that a church should be in peace and harmony; fellowship should prevail among the members of a church if the church is to succeed in her work. "Be of one mind" was Paul's admonition. He also admonished one church to be likeminded with Christ. If a church has members who have the mind of Christ, there will be agreement.

Any thing, any act, any disposition or attitude that will affect in a hindering way should be looked into. The party or parties guilty of causing such conditions in a church should be dealt with. Pastors and churches working cooperatively should guard against such conditions. They should strive to keep down any occasion for such to exist in a church. A lack of peace and harmony will affect the progress of a church.

Disorderly or Immoral Conduct — A member of a church might be guilty of some act that could not be classed strictly as immoral, but it might be very disorderly. For instance, a member may, because of carelessness or indifference, habitually absent himself from the regular and stated services of the church. That is disorderly. When members are guilty of such, the church should look into the matter. If necessary, they should deal with the offenders.

Churches have been known to make a rule that if a member absented himself for three times in succession without good and sufficient reasons the church would take action against him. A church has no authority to pass such rules, for a church is not a law-making body; but the Scriptures teach that church members should not forsake the assembling of themselves together. A church does have the right to class disorderly such as willingly and purposely absent themselves from her services and to deal with them accordingly. Many other things constitute disorderliness, but that is given merely as an example.

Such acts as drunkenness, fornication, adultery, revelry (which includes dancing and such like), theft, and many other sins are classed as immoral sins. The Scriptures are too plain as to what to do when members are guilty of such things. Even an unregenerate man will readily say that those who are guilty of such sins should not be members of a church. A church will certainly hurt her influence by allowing those who are openly guilty of such things to remain in her membership.

A church cannot be too scrupulous in regard to her discipline. The Scriptures teach that the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in a church of Jesus Christ. If a church is composed of a large number of members who are guilty of immorality, is it

reasonable to think that the Holy Spirit will long dwell in her? He is pure and holy; He will dwell only in a clean temple. If a church desires the Holy Spirit to reside in her, she must keep a clean house. The Lord's spiritual house, the church, should — above all things — be kept clean.

The Attitude of a Church

What should be the attitude of a church toward those who have been excluded from her membership? That is an important question, for the attitude which a church takes toward such may largely determine the effectiveness of the discipline. A church should have a noble object in view in withdrawing from disorderly members. Such an attitude, if assumed by all the members, will help toward the attainment of that object.

Jesus said with reference to the personal offense of the one who would not hear the church, "*Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican*" (Matthew 18:17). The excluded member should be treated and regarded as a sinner, or an unregenerate person.

The degree of the offense will naturally determine, to some extent, the attitude a church should assume toward the excluded party. If the offense is one of an extremely immoral nature, the offender should not expect very

much pleasant and polite consideration from the church; but a church might go too far in such cases. An excluded member, regardless of the crime committed, should not be treated in such a manner as to lead him to think that the church has no interest in his spiritual condition. Such an attitude might provoke one to despair. He might be caused to "throw himself away."

The attitude of a church toward an excluded member should be such as will make him understand that the church did not endorse the disorderliness which caused his expulsion. Certainly there can be no communion such as existed while he was a member of a church in good standing. Paul said, "*If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother*" (II Thessalonians 3:14, 15).

"Have no company with him" evidently refers to church fellowship. One would not be forbidden, by the injunction of the apostle, to have any sort of association with the excluded member.

Paul also said, "*If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat*" (I Corinthians 5:11). Spiritual fellowship as it is

enjoyed by members of a church is to be withheld from those who have been excluded. The attitude of a church toward those who have been excluded should be such as will convince them of the guilt of their crime. It should make them more conscious of it, and the Lord will use such an attitude as an occasion to bring them back to a proper disposition. It will hasten the time when they will be brought back into the fold, if they really are saved individuals.

The Motive for Church Discipline

What is the true motive for church discipline? Is it to get revenge? That should not be the motive. It is not the scriptural motive! It may sometimes be a false motive.

A church should have certain well defined motives in view in the disciplining of a member. The one disciplined should understand those motives. He should not be withdrawn from and left thinking that some who did not appreciate him were getting revenge. There are at least three pure and holy objects to be attained in church discipline: (1) the glory of God, (2) the chastity of the churches, and (3) spiritual improvement.

The Glory of God

The motive prompting all that a church does should be to honor and to glorify God. Paul

said, "*Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen*" (Ephesians 3:21). When a church exercises discipline upon her members, it should be done to and for the glory of God the same as any other act of the church.

A church cannot glorify God without exercising discipline. The ungodly and disorderly in her membership will prevent it. Members who engage in ungodly and disorderly conduct certainly do not glorify God. A church can glorify God only as He is glorified in the lives of her members. If there be those members in a church who persist in disorderly living, the church glorifies Him in withdrawing from them.

The Chastity of the Churches

Churches are admonished in the Scriptures to keep themselves as chaste virgins. That means that they are to keep themselves pure from sin and worldliness. The church's mingling in worldly affairs is called in the Scriptures fornication. A church may be guilty of spiritual fornication just as a person may be guilty of fleshly fornication.

The church is admonished to be separate from the world. The world is the enemy of the church; therefore, the church cannot com-

promise with the world and be true to God or be chaste. God requires faithfulness of the churches of Christ. Christ's exhortation to the church at Smyrna was, "*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*" (Revelation 2:10).

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:15-17). If a church loves the world, it is evident that she does not love God; love for God and love for the world do not dwell at the same time in the same heart.

Jesus said in His intercessory prayer, "*They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*" (John 17:16). The churches are not institutions of the world; therefore, they should separate from the world. Some have argued that that scripture is not applicable to a church; but if the New Testament scriptures are not applicable to a church, let the objectors point out to what they are applicable.

One should read Paul's appeal to the Corinthian church for a separate life (II Corinthians 6:11-18).

Spiritual Improvement

When a church exercises her right in disciplining a member, it should be done for the spiritual improvement of that member. In the case of the personal offense Christ pointed out that the "gaining of the offender" is to be regarded as the motive (Matthew 18:15-19). If one is overtaken in a fault, the spiritual are to restore him in the spirit of meekness, but not without a proper attitude and disposition upon his part (Galatians 6:1). If the offender is truly penitent, he should be restored.

Withdrawal of fellowship should be resorted to only when all reasonable efforts to make the proper corrections have failed. Then exclusion should be done in a spirit of solemnity and never in a spirit of ill feeling or anger. Such would destroy the very purpose of the withdrawal. When a church withdraws from a member, she signifies that she has exhausted all reasonable resources of getting the offender to do his duty. She turns the offender over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit might be saved in the day of judgment (I Corinthians 5:3-5).

There should be no manifestation of bitterness, persecution, oppression, or a desire for revenge. All should be done in meekness and fear, with a full realization that all must appear

before the judgment seat of Christ and be judged for the deeds done in the body.

When a church withdraws from a member, it does not mean that the individual is not a saved person. It means that the conduct of the excluded member has not been in accord with the high and holy ideals that should be maintained by a member of a church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Withdrawal is for the purpose of enforcing that thought upon the excluded that he may soon repent and return to the fellowship of the church.

8

The Mission of a Church

A great deal has been said relative to the mission of the churches of Christ. It is difficult to speak or write on the essential qualities of a church, her doctrines, and other subjects which have been treated without intimating her mission.

To the church are committed the most solemn and sacred duties that can be entrusted to human agencies. Unless aided by divine power, church members are utterly incapacitated to accomplish the mission, to perform the duties, or to meet the obligations and

responsibilities enjoined upon them by their church relationship. In order that they might do those things, the great Head promised His abiding presence with the church. There is no responsibility that cannot be met and no mission that cannot be fulfilled by the church if she looks to Jesus for power. Solemnly and reverently consider the mission of the churches. Their mission is: (1) to evangelize the world, (2) to glorify God, (3) to preserve and enlighten, (4) to be God's earthly abode, (5) to be the pillar and ground of the truth, and (6) to offer spiritual sacrifices.

To Evangelize the World

The primary mission of the churches of Christ in the world is to evangelize it — to make disciples for the Lord Jesus. Towering above all other means of grace for the making of disciples stands the preaching of the gospel. Paul wrote to the church at Rome, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* (Romans 1:16). From the pen of the same apostle one may read: *"After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"* (I Corinthians 1:21).

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! . . . So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:14, 15, 17.) The greatest responsibility of the church is the preaching of the gospel — the proclaiming of the way of life and salvation to those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

Included in the commission that authorizes the churches to preach the gospel are also the commands to baptize those who become disciples and to teach them to observe all things whatsoever the Lord commanded. From the commission, we learn that the primary mission of the church is threefold: (1) to make disciples by the preaching of the gospel, (2) to baptize those who have been made disciples, and (3) to teach the disciples to observe all things whatsoever the Lord has commanded. Upon faithful performance of that mission the churches have the promise, *“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (age).”* To be assured of the Lord’s presence, the churches must faithfully fulfill their mission.

To Glorify God

It is the mission of the church to glorify God upon the earth. God is rightfully expecting to be glorified in the church because He sacrificed His only begotten Son to purchase her that He might be glorified in and through her. *"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen"* (Ephesians 3:21). We learn from that statement that (1) God is to be glorified in the church; (2) Christ is the agent by whom God is to be glorified; and (3) the church is the instrument in which He is to be glorified. That phase of the mission of the churches is accomplished only by their faithful obedience to the commands of their sovereign head.

God is not honored or glorified, it is sad to say, by all the activities of today's churches. We mean by the term *churches* the true churches. Churches of today, like Israel in the past, desire to be like those around them; therefore, they follow man-made programs. By so doing, they depart from the "ancient landmarks which our fathers have set." It is not the prerogative of the churches to make programs; it is theirs to carry out the commands of the Head and Lawgiver.

There is no way by which a subject may bestow greater glory upon his superior than by meek, humble, and loving obedience to his will.

There is no greater glory which the church can give God, through Christ, than so to obey His divine commands. (See Ephesians 3:10.)

To Preserve and Enlighten

In His masterful Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught some great lessons relative to the mission of the church. He said, "*Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men*" (Matthew 5:13). The church should make the world a more pleasant place in which to live; she should give the world a good moral and spiritual taste. She should have a restraining influence upon the evil of the world; she should not encourage, condone, or compromise with it; but she should restrain it.

By her good influence, or by the godly lives of her members and their separation from the world, the church should give people a thirst for the "water of life." Church members should conduct themselves before the world in such a way that they would show the excellency of the life of Christ. They should cause others to desire that life.

Jesus preached that the church is the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). By that He meant that the church is to reflect His light. Jesus

himself is the "Sun of Righteousness." The church, like the moon, reflecting the light of the sun, should reflect the light of Christ to and in the world. The world is in dense moral and spiritual darkness. It must look to the church for moral and spiritual light, without which the world will sink into eternal despair and ruin.

Jesus taught that the individual Christian should not put his light under a bushel, and thus hide it, but that he should put it on a candlestick (the church) that it might shine to those in darkness as a beacon, guiding them to the one and only foundation of true spiritual life and light.

He put the church under a very solemn obligation: "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*" (Matthew 5:16).

To Be God's Earthly Abode

The church is designed to be God's earthly abode, or dwelling place. Paul said that the church is the "house of God." "*These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*"

(I Timothy 3:14, 15). When a man speaks of his house, he means his dwelling place, or place of permanent abode, in the world. Paul proclaimed that the church is the institution in which God dwells upon the earth. Without His abiding presence in the church, she is a helpless and valueless institution, as far as her spiritual mission is concerned.

A pitiful state of affairs spiritually is represented in Christ's message to the church of Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22). Christ is represented as being on the outside knocking for admittance. His proper place is on the inside, leading and directing all the affairs of the church. If that is not true, the church is, like the savourless salt, ready to be trodden under foot of men. (See Ephesians 2:19-22.)

To Be the Pillar and Ground of the Truth

Not only is the church to be the dwelling place of God through the Spirit, but she is to be the pillar and ground of the truth. She is to be the foundation and support of the truth. The church has truth for a foundation, for she is built upon Christ. Christ said that He is "the truth" (John 14:6).

As far as the world is concerned, the church is the only institution to which one may look for the whole truth of God. Error has no place in a church of Jesus Christ. The church, being

built upon the foundation of truth, should uphold, defend, and proclaim the truth. The lives of the members of the church of Christ should be an exemplification of the truth; otherwise, she will fail in her divinely appointed mission.

To Offer Spiritual Sacrifices

Another phase of the church's mission is to offer spiritual sacrifices to God by Jesus Christ. Jesus is the eternal High Priest. There is a priesthood of believers of which the Old Testament priesthood was a type. The apostle Peter said, "*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood*" (I Peter 2:9). Every believer is a priest under the New Testament economy. The New Testament church, being composed of believers in Christ, forms a priesthood; by the new birth, believers are children of and priests unto God.

The greatest privilege of a priest is access to God. Under the law only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and that but once each year. He alone could approach God and have God manifest himself to him in His *shekinah* glory. (See Hebrews 9:7.)

At the death of Christ the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom, signifying that the believer-priest has access to God without going through a priest other than

Christ. (See Hebrews 10:19-22.) In the exercise of his priestly function the believer offers (1) his body (Romans 12:1; Philippians 2:17; II Timothy 4:6; I John 3:16), (2) praise to God (Hebrews 13:15; Exodus 25:22), (3) his substance (Hebrews 13:2, 16; Romans 12:13; Galatians 6:6; III John 5, 8; Galatians 6:10; Titus 3:14).

Furthermore the believer-priest is an intercessor. A church, composed of an aggregate of believer-priests, is (as a body) an intercessor. When in faith she intercedes to God through Christ, God is pleased to hear her prayers. There is nothing more pleasing to the Father than for a church to be concerned deeply for the lost and to make earnest and humble intercession for them.

9

The Duties of a Church

Many duties devolve upon a church of the Lord Jesus Christ. In an inclusive and comprehensive way the supreme duty of a church is to do her part in fulfilling the mission which the Lord gave to the church as an institution. Notice some of the most important duties of a church.

Duties of Members Toward Each Other

A church of Jesus Christ constitutes a government, or a little province, all its own. Some have likened the membership of a church

to a large family. That may be done, if not carried too far. A church is a part of the family of God. Members of a church should be and feel toward each other as a family in Christ. There should be a strong cord of spiritual sympathy and affection among the members of a church of the Lord Jesus.

A close and prayerful study of the Church Covenant will point out some very sacred duties which church members owe to each other. That is true because the covenant is based upon the Scriptures. A prayerful and earnest study of the New Testament, especially the epistles, will reveal those duties.

The older and more mature members of a church have a special obligation to the younger and immature members. New members need encouragement, counsel, training, and prayers. Sometimes older people are too ready to censure the young members of churches. Perhaps the dereliction of the older members toward the younger members accounts for the youngers' shortcomings. Young people are energetic and active; they need employment. It is up to a church to furnish them the right sort of employment. It is the duty of a church to see that their activities are directed in a spiritual rather than in a worldly way.

The church which is rightly watching and directing the younger members will have opportunity to observe their gifts. Many would

be encouraged earlier in life to enter some special service if churches would assume their full responsibilities toward their young people.

Young Christians have worldly objects to surmount in the line of any performance of duty to the Lord. They need help, prayers, and sympathy.

Duties of Churches Toward Each Other

Despite the fact that churches are independent, there are duties which they owe to each other. They can be mutually helpful in the prosecution of the Lord's work in the world. Each church is subject to the same laws and to the same Lord. Every church is working, or should be, under the Great Commission. Each church has the same task. That should bind the churches by strong cords of Christian love and sympathy. They may not be bound in any kind of organization, but they should be bound in love and sympathy because they have a mutual task and mission. Churches should respect the right and the independence of every other church; but there should be a willingness, even an eagerness, to cooperate as equals in carrying out the mission which Christ gave to His churches.

It is a sad thing for churches to become alienated because of strife, discord, and contention. When those things happen, the cause

is hindered, and the churches are in the wrong attitude to enjoy the fullness of the blessings from the Lord. Matters which discourage fellowship and cooperation among churches should be suppressed.

Duties to the Unsaved

A church is under solemn obligation to the lost, especially those in her vicinity. A solemn obligation rests upon a church to do all that the means of her membership will permit in sending the gospel into all the world. Every church of the Lord Jesus is bound by the Great Commission to evangelize the whole world, but a church is under obligation to make personal contacts with the unsaved in her own vicinity. There are other minor duties which churches owe to the unsaved, but every member of the church should be fully conscious that the supreme duty he owes to the unsaved is to seek to lead them to Christ that they might be saved from sin.

Churches should engage in: (1) personal work among the lost, (2) maintaining preaching and teaching services, and (3) distributing Bibles and gospel tracts.

Personal Work Among the Lost

Church members should seek opportunities to speak to the lost in regard to their salvation.

Many have said that they desire to be soul-winners. The Scriptures teach that a soul-winner is wise. Solomon said, "*He that winneth souls is wise*" (Proverbs 11:30). "*They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever*" (Daniel 12:3). What greater incentive for soul-winning could there be? All should desire heavenly or godly wisdom; winning souls is a manifestation of that wisdom. All should desire to shine as the stars in eternity; the way to be a bright satellite in heaven is to be a soul-winner now.

Since He has gone back to His Father, Christ has chosen the church as His representative in the world. Jesus said that He came into the world to seek and to save those who were lost. The church cannot save, but she can point the lost to the Savior. That is her solemn duty to the unsaved.

Maintaining Preaching and Teaching Services

The great object of the preaching of the gospel of Christ is that sinners might be saved from their sins. Not only should a church realize her responsibility in that respect, but the preacher also should realize that he stands, as it were, as a mouthpiece between the living and the dead. Every sermon should contain

some warning to the lost; it should also "hold forth the word of life" to them. God has promised to accompany the preached Word to the hearts of the lost by the Holy Spirit, to send conviction to their souls, and to woo them to Christ. The responsibility for the preaching of the gospel rests upon the church; but the preacher is also responsible, for he is called by the Holy Spirit of God for that specific duty. There needs to be an awakening among churches to a keener sense of that solemn responsibility.

Churches should maintain regular teaching services in which the lost are taught the Word of God. That is one phase of the work of a church's Sunday School. The Sunday School affords a wonderful opportunity for sowing the seeds of gospel truths into the hearts of the lost. If a church is faithful to sow the seeds, the Lord will take care that they bring forth to His honor and glory. Sunday School classes are usually made up of both the lost and the saved. The saved are given an opportunity to do some effective sowing. God has used many faithful and consecrated Sunday School teachers in leading the lost to salvation.

Distributing Bibles and Gospel Tracts

There is nothing better than a Bible to put into the hands of a lost individual. He should

be given the Word of God and encouraged to read it. A revival of Bible reading is needed. People cannot conscientiously read the Scriptures without being touched by them. God makes His Word mighty in the hearts of men who read and study it. If Bible reading is revived, there will be a great revival of the Christian religion.

Gospel tracts have been very effectively used among the lost. Members of churches should keep tracts to hand to their unsaved friends. Some may never read them, but most will respect the giver of a tract enough to read it. Reading a good gospel tract may result in one's conversion.

10

The Association of Churches

The association of the churches of Jesus Christ as equals is a New Testament doctrine. The churches of Christ in New Testament times associated in the work, but they in no way so combined as to lose their independence. If churches so combine as to lose their individuality, independence, and freedom, they cease to be true churches. A fundamental tenet of faith in a Baptist church is her independence and individuality.

A scriptural association is not composed of messengers who are elected by the churches and sent to a meeting. It is composed of churches. Churches in a district, county, state, or nation may cooperate in carrying out the will of the divine head of the church. Any such cooperation is an association.

Most churches associate in county, or district, and state organizations. There is also the cooperative effort of most of our churches in the Baptist Missionary Association of America. All the associations are alike in principle; the only difference is that the state associations cover more territory than the county or district associations. The national association includes churches throughout the United States.

District or county associations are chiefly concerned with evangelizing the territory contiguous to the churches composing them; the state associations are primarily interested in evangelizing the state in which the churches composing them are located. The national association's chief business is to evangelize the world.

The efforts of the national association are divided into phases: interstate and foreign missions, publications, benevolence, the armed forces chaplaincy, Christian education, youth work, radio/television ministry, and administration.

Limits of an Association

It is not the province of associations, either district, state, or national, to control or to exercise any sort of dominion over the churches. Instead of the association "running" the churches, the churches must "run" the association. Associations, in the strict sense of the term, are not organizations. When the messengers of the churches composing associations meet, they go into a sort of temporary organization. That is necessary in order that everything may be carried on in order and in decency. While they are in the organization, however, they can transact no business or do anything that will, in any way, bind the churches. The association is a creature of the churches; the churches are not creatures of the association.

The association proper never meets to transact any sort of business; only the messengers of the churches composing the association meet and counsel concerning the execution of the work authorized by the respective churches. It is the duty of messengers to know the will of their respective churches and to do only that which they know is the will of the churches. Actions initiated by messengers in the meetings, without the knowledge or consent of their churches, cannot be binding upon the churches. Churches cannot be bound, even

by themselves, by any law, duty, or mission by which the Lord and head of the church has not already bound them.

Churches cannot recommit their authority to messengers who are sent to the stated meetings of the association. The associational meeting is merely a committee composed of messengers sent by their churches. Churches may commit certain duties to committees to be performed, but they cannot commit to them any authority. The messengers of the churches can voice only what is the will of their respective churches. The authority is, and must ever remain, in the churches.

Values of an Association

The Lord recognized the value and importance of fellowship, cooperation, or association. His knowledge of that was His primary reason for instituting the church. In unity there is strength. In the constitution of a church no person loses his individuality or liberty. A church of Jesus Christ is simply a cooperative effort of individuals in carrying on the work assigned the churches by the Lord. He could have easily commissioned each disciple individually to have done His work, but He knew that more could be accomplished through the unified efforts. Therefore, He instituted His church that believers might unite their

efforts for the ongoing of His work.

The church is a necessary institution. She is needed for the inspiration which she gives. She is needed for her communion and worship. A live coal lifted from the fire and placed alone on the hearth will soon fade into coldness while the other coals glow with heat. As one writer put it, "We need the stimulation of other people's interest, the contagion of their enthusiasm."

Through the cooperation of God's children in church capacity, more can be accomplished in a given community. Through the association and cooperation of churches more can be accomplished in the world. One church, working alone, cannot fulfill the Great Commission; but all churches working cooperatively can evangelize the whole world.

Two or more churches may associate in cooperative effort, just as two or more individuals can do so. They can do so without surrendering their individuality, independence, or rights as churches. That is the kind of association taught in the Scriptures.

Solomon, though not writing to churches, stated the principles of cooperation: "*Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then*

they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him: and a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

Solomon was merely stating that in unity there is strength. Churches may work together in unity, but they cannot form a union.

It is entirely optional with a church as to whether she associates with other churches. There is no law that can force a church to do so, for there is no ecclesiastical authority higher than that of a church.

The way in which churches may associate in the work of evangelization and benevolence is revealed in the Scriptures.

By studying Acts and the epistles one will learn that missionaries were sent out, that is elected, by a church. Other churches then cooperated in supporting them.

In the great cooperative work of the churches known as the Baptist Missionary Association of America, missionaries are elected by their churches. Then the association, which is composed of churches, agrees to cooperate in their support. That is truly associated work. No church surrenders her independence in associating in the work of supporting the missionaries chosen by means of messengers of sister churches.

There are two extremes into which churches

have fallen as to the way of doing missionary and benevolent work.

One of those is the way practiced by churches cooperating after the convention order. The expressed purpose of the Southern Baptist Convention is to "elicit, combine, and direct the energies of the entire denomination." Any agency or institution that can elicit, combine, and direct the energies of the entire denomination, meaning all the churches, can easily become a powerful influence. The convention system tends to remove the decision-making process too far from the churches. It is unscriptural for churches to surrender their independence and become subject to any other body.

The other extreme is the so-called Direct Gospel Mission Plan. According to that plan a church sends out a missionary and then solicits aid from other churches in his support. That plan gives the other churches no voice whatsoever in the selection of such missionaries. That plan seems to disregard the independence of the other churches. One church cannot demand that other churches support those elected by her, but is it not an infringement of one church upon another to solicit her support of those elected without her voice? Would there not be as much propriety in a church's calling a pastor and soliciting the aid of other churches in his support as there is in electing

missionaries and soliciting funds from other churches to support them?

No one church can do all that is required in the Great Commission in regard to evangelizing the world, but all working in cooperation can send the gospel of Christ into every nation. The Scriptures make due provision for such cooperative effort. It is the part of wisdom for the churches to follow the scriptural way of association in the work.

Participation in an Association

It is a common practice for a church, coming into a district association, to present a petitionary letter. The letter usually certifies to the messengers of the churches composing the association that the church is sound in the faith and regular in her order. As a rule, information is given as to her Articles of Faith and Church Covenant. The messengers, being satisfied as to the soundness and regularity of the church, fellowship the messengers from the petitioning church. The moderator, as a rule, gives the hand of fellowship.

In the different state associations and in the Baptist Missionary Association of America, the same general procedure is followed. When a church wishes to come into the fellowship of a state association or the Baptist Missionary Association of America, she presents a peti-

tionary letter stating agreement with the Statement of Principles of Cooperation, and the church is received by vote of the messenger body. That is done as a matter of precaution.

Our churches believe in taking every precaution possible to keep those not in agreement with them from having their representatives among them to cause friction. They desire association with all churches which are in full sympathy and fellowship with their principles, but they do not want any which are in disagreement with them on their principles of associated work.

When churches come into the associated work, they should be willing fully to declare themselves in fellowship with other churches in the work. All orthodox churches which so declare themselves will be heartily received into the various district, state, and national associations.

11

Some Parliamentary Suggestions

Business Meetings of a Church

It should never be necessary for churches to be bound by iron-clad parliamentary laws in their business meetings. Christian love and courtesy should prevail to such an extent that a church can carry on her business transactions without paying too much heed to parliamentary regulations. Enough should be known, however, about such laws for a church to carry on a business meeting in "decency and in order." The author hopes that what is said

here regarding parliamentary usage will be sufficient for the average church to guide her in judiciously expediting whatever may come before her in the average business meeting.

The pastor of a church is, unless for some reason disqualified, the moderator of all the church's business meetings. There is a parliamentary rule that the presiding officer of any organized body may vote in case of a tie, provided that he is a member of the body. Some churches have ministers who do not hold membership in the churches to which they preach at stated times. In such cases the moderator is not to cast the deciding vote, for the simple reason he is not a member of that body. He has no right to cast a vote in any of her proceedings. If the pastor is a member of the church, he may vote.

Most of the recent texts on parliamentary usage say that where the presiding officer is a member of the body over which he presides, he should be allowed a vote on all questions which come before it for settlement. It does not seem plausible that one's being a presiding officer over a body should disfranchise him.

Church conferences, or business meetings, usually follow either the prayer service or the preaching service of a church. If that should not be the case, a devotional service should always precede the business meeting. There should at least be the singing of a gospel song,

a Scripture reading, and a prayer. The business meeting of a church should be regarded as a sacred and spiritual session the same as any other service of the church.

After the meeting is opened, the first item of business is the reading of the minutes of previous meetings which have not been approved by the church. Corrections should be made, if necessary, and the minutes approved.

The next item of business should be to take up unfinished business, if there is such. If there is unfinished business, the minutes should always reflect it.

The next item is that of new business, such as the treasurer's report, and committee reports, if there be such, and whatever else might be necessary for the consideration of the church.

It is not necessary to have a motion to take up unfinished business, since it is a matter of record; but the records should be cleared before new business is transacted. The reading of unfinished items of business places them before the church without a motion.

All items of new business should be placed before the church in the form of a motion, except the rendering of committee reports. After the report is given to the church, it is in order that a motion be made either to receive or to reject the report, and to retain or to discharge the committee.

If it is deemed wise to postpone any business of the church, it is in order that a motion be made to do so.

Relative to Motions

No matter of business is ever before a church until a motion has been made by a member and stated by the moderator. Recent usage does not require a second to a motion in order to introduce matters of business in small parliamentary bodies; it does in large bodies. It is the duty of the presiding officer either to state a motion or to declare it out of order.

A motion made and stated by the presiding officer cannot be withdrawn without the consent of the body. After it is made and stated, it becomes the property of the body; it is no longer the property of the mover.

During the discussion of a motion no new motion can be made, but it is in order to move an amendment to the original motion. If any amendment is accepted by the mover of the original motion, the amendment becomes a part of the original motion.

It is good parliamentary usage to amend an amendment, but that is as far as it should go. If so much amending is necessary, a substitute motion should be offered.

Privileged motions include such matters as to adjourn, to lay on the table, to amend, to

commit, to postpone, and to have the previous question. They are known as privileged motions because they may be made at any time. The motion to adjourn has precedence over all others, but a motion cannot be made to adjourn while a member is speaking or while a vote is being taken.

When a motion to adjourn is made and voted down, the body cannot then adjourn until other business is transacted.

It is rarely necessary to move the previous question in business meetings of churches or in associations. When such a motion is made, the moderator should say, "Shall the main question be now put?" If the vote is in the affirmative, all discussion is stopped and the question is voted upon. If the motion is voted down, discussion may be continued on the question.

A motion for the previous question requires a two-thirds majority to pass.

A motion to table or to take from the table requires only a majority.

Obtaining the Floor

Before a member can make a motion or address the assembly, he must obtain the floor. To do that he should rise, address the moderator, and be recognized by him. He may then state his motion or make his address.

It is out of order for one to try to obtain the floor while someone is addressing the assembly.

If a member who is addressing a meeting is not in order, it is the duty of the moderator to call him to order. If the moderator does not do so, a member may rise, address the moderator, and call for a point of order; but that is very seldom necessary.

Appealing to the Assembly

When a member is dissatisfied with the ruling of the moderator, he may appeal to the body. The body either sustains or reverses the decision of the moderator.

Reception of Members

Members may be received into a church at any regularly stated meeting. Members may be granted letters of dismissal at the regularly stated meetings.

A church has the right, if she so desires, to exclude a member at any regularly stated meeting; but it is usually preferable to do that in the regular business meetings.

A Baptist church is a regular deliberative body. She may transact business in any stated meeting as it becomes necessary.

The clerk of the church should keep minutes of every meeting of the church. It is his duty to

make a correct record of the proceedings of every business meeting. He should also make a notation of every meeting of the church, as to its nature and object, and by whom conducted.

Councils

There are times when it is advisable for a church to call a council of sister churches. Councils are of various natures and purposes: (1) for the ordination of ministers and deacons, (2) to aid in difficult cases of discipline, especially of ministers, (3) to recognize a newly organized church, and (4) to consider differences between churches.

Councils are purely advisory. They can have no authority above that of the church. A church has the authority to settle any question for herself; but if she so desires, she may seek counsel of her sister churches.

A lengthy discussion of the manner of procedure in a council is not necessary. A council should proceed in a businesslike manner and be deliberate in its actions.

It is necessary that a council have a chairman and a clerk. The object of the council should be plainly stated so that it may proceed in a deliberate manner.

For more extended and thorough information on parliamentary usage the reader is advised to study some good text on parliamentary law.

ISBN 0-89114-056-5

\$2.50



P7-ERY-885